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(54) Title: GAMING DEVICE HAVING MULTIPLE SELECTABLE DISPLAY INTERFACES

(57) Abstract: An apparatus and method for displaying multiple gaming device interfaces for the same wagering game is provided. The game can be slot although other wagering games are also within the scope of the present invention. In one embodiment, the exact same game is played using one of a plurality of different display interfaces, wherein the gaming device enables the player to select which interface to play. The player can play the game for a while using one interface and then switch interfaces to provide a fresh display or to change the player's luck. The player can then switch back to the original interface or select a brand new interface depending upon how many interfaces overall are provided.



WO 2005/026894 A2

GAMING DEVICE HAVING MULTIPLE SELECTABLE DISPLAY INTERFACES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 The purpose of indicia on paper is to convey information. While this is also true for visual effects in wagering gaming devices, images and indicia displayed by a wagering game's display device have the additional extremely important purpose of providing or increasing entertainment for the player. If some players are not entertained, they will not play a wagering gaming
10 machine. Also, more recently, players have come to expect more entertainment from gaming devices, for example, those having video displays rather than the older mechanical displays and those having bonus games.

 Since one of the primary purposes of a wagering gaming device is to provide entertainment, there is a major challenge for gaming device
15 manufacturers to develop new games that increase the amount of entertainment provided to players. Players are entertained not only by the risk of a wager but also by attractive, engaging, interesting, fun, new and different visual, audio, and audio-visual effects. For those reasons, the gaming industry is constantly seeking to make advancements in the displays including graphics
20 and other visual effects provided to the player. If one views a wagering gaming device as only a wagering mechanism, the display or graphical aspect of the wagering gaming device may appear to have little value. However, by remembering that a wagering gaming device is an entertainment device as well as, or in addition to, a wagering device, the importance of an interesting
25 and exciting graphical display and the technical challenges faced by gaming personnel to develop such displays becomes apparent. Simultaneously, to maintain certain player's interest in a gaming machine for a significant period of time, such gaming machines must be highly interesting, entertaining and enjoyable.

30 Increased entertainment, in combination with other elements such as providing messages and/or awards to players, provides a useful, concrete and tangible result provided by a wagering gaming device. It is therefore desirable

to provide new, fun and exciting ways to display a primary or base game or a secondary or bonus game of a gaming device, to entertain the players and to hold a player's interest.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

One embodiment of the present invention includes an apparatus and method for displaying multiple gaming device interfaces for the same game of the present invention. In one embodiment, the game is the game of slot although other wagering games are also within the scope of the present invention. In one embodiment, the exact same game is played using one of a plurality of different display interfaces. In one embodiment, the gaming device enables the player to select which interface to play. The player can play the game for a while using one interface and then switch interfaces to provide a fresh display or to try to change the player's luck. The player can then switch back to the original interface or select a brand new interface depending upon how many interfaces the gaming device is adapted to provide.

The different interfaces include the same number of different symbols in one embodiment. For example, each interface could include thirty different symbols, wherein each symbol of an interface is functionally identical to, corresponds to or relates to a symbol in each of the different interfaces. Of the functionally identical, corresponding or related symbols, some can be symbols common to more than one or all of the interfaces. For example, a bonus symbol or a wild symbol can be common to more than one or all the interfaces and perform the identical function. Other functionally identical, corresponding or related symbols are different but have similar indicia. For example, a symbol displaying a human character in one interface can correspond to a different symbol displaying a different human character in another interface. A first kind of fruit in one interface can correspond to a second kind of fruit in a second interface, etc.

Other functionally identical, corresponding or related symbols of different interfaces bear no likeness to one another. They are functionally identical or related however because they occupy the same spot in a payable

common to each of the interfaces and thus have exactly the same function in the game. For instance, if bananas in one interface correspond to flying saucers in a second interface, which both correspond to fish in a third interface, and if three bananas appear on the first three reels along a payline
5 pays fifty credits in the first interface, then three flying saucers and three fish appearing in the same positions of the reels in their respective interfaces also each pay fifty credits.

The present invention includes different methods for activating the change of an interface. In one embodiment, the player changes the interfaces
10 as desired. An input device can be provided that enables the player to toggle through the interfaces until reaching a desired interface. This input device is displayed in one embodiment on the display device and selectable by a player through a touch screen. Alternatively, the input can be a mechanical button on the gaming device. In another embodiment, an input device for each interface
15 is provided, so that the player can simply touch a dedicated button to display and play a desired interface. Those dedicated input devices can be provided in one alternative embodiment on a call-up menu, for example, in combination with the payable. Here, the players can view the payable, each of the symbols associated with each of the interfaces, and then select a desired
20 interface via a dedicated input device.

In an alternative embodiment, the gaming device automatically changes display interfaces without the player's input. Such automatic change can occur: (i) randomly based on a non-game event; (ii) randomly based on a game event; (iii) based on the player's wager or a component thereof; (iv)
25 based on credits lost or accumulated; (v) based on a number of times the player has played the gaming device consecutively; (vi) based on a tabulation maintained by a player tracking card; (vii) based on a game theme (e.g., to follow the story line of the game theme); or (viii) any combination thereof.

In another alternative embodiment, a component of the game varies
30 from interface to interface. That is, the game changes in one or more ways based on the interface chosen and played. For example, a change in interfaces can lead to a change in: (i) payable volatility; (ii) payback

percentage; (iii) bonusing; (iv) wager requirement for eligibility for bonus game, jackpot win, persistence meter increment, progressive payout, etc.; (v) triggering event for one or more bonus games; (vi) total number of different symbols in sets, e.g., one interface has ten different symbols while other
5 interface has twelve; (vii) proportion and/or ordering of symbols on the reel strips; and (viii) any combination thereof.

The gaming device employing the multiple interfaces also keeps a log of games with which the player can review if the player has a question about a prior game result. In one implementation, the gaming device stores the
10 previous ten game plays. The gaming device stores information such as, the player's wager, the wager components, the outcome on each payline and the total outcome, such as player wins nothing, player wins less than wager, player wins wager amount, and player wins more than wager amount. In one embodiment, the log also records the particular interface used in each game.
15 The player can therefore review which interface was used, e.g., ten games ago, seven games ago, five games ago, etc.

It is therefore an advantage of the present invention to provide a fun and exciting wagering game.

It is another advantage of the present invention to provide a fun and
20 exciting gaming device display.

It is a further advantage of the present invention to provide a gaming device having different player selectable game interfaces for the same game.

It is still another advantage of the present invention to provide a gaming device having different automatically changing game interfaces.

25 It is still a further advantage of the present invention to provide a gaming device having different automatically changing game interfaces that follow a story line of a theme of the gaming device.

Moreover, it is an advantage of the present invention to provide a gaming device having different game interfaces, but wherein the game plays
30 and pays the same.

Still further, it is an advantage of the present invention to provide a gaming device having different game interfaces, and wherein the game plays and/or pays differently for different game interfaces.

Additional features and advantages of the present invention are described in, and will be apparent from, the following Detailed Description of the Invention and the figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

Figs. 1A and 1B are front perspective views of various embodiments of a slot machine embodiment of the gaming device of the present invention.

Fig. 2A is a schematic block diagram of the electronic configuration of one embodiment of the gaming device of the present invention.

Fig. 2B is a schematic block diagram of various gaming devices employing the wagering game of the present invention, wherein the devices are networked to a central controller.

Figs. 3A, 3B and 3C are elevation views of a display device showing the same game outcome using three different display interfaces of the present invention.

Figs. 4A, 4B and 4C are elevation views of a display device showing a different game outcome from the one shown in Figs. 3A to 3C using again three different display interfaces of the present invention.

Fig. 5 is an elevation view of a display device showing a paytable linking related symbols of different interfaces and an interface selection menu of the present invention.

Figs. 6, 7 and 8 are schematic flow diagrams illustrating three different methods of using the multiple display interfaces of the present invention.

Fig. 9 is a non-inclusive table of different scenarios for why the game could automatically switch game interfaces of the present invention without a player input.

Fig. 10 is a non-inclusive table of different variables that could vary from game interface to game interface of the present invention.

Fig. 11 is an illustration of an area of memory that stores a game log showing information concerning the last ten plays of the gaming device of the present invention including plays using different game interfaces.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The Gaming Device Generally

Referring now to the drawings, two alternative embodiments of the gaming device of the present invention are illustrated in Figs. 1A and 1B as gaming device 10a and gaming device 10b, respectively. Gaming device 10a and/or gaming device 10b are generally referred to herein as gaming device 10.

In one embodiment, as illustrated in Figs. 1A and 1B, gaming device 10 has a support structure, housing or cabinet which provides support for a plurality of displays, inputs, controls and other features of a conventional gaming machine. It is configured so that a player can operate it while standing or sitting. The gaming device may be positioned on a base or stand or can be configured as a pub-style table-top game (not shown) which a player can operate preferably while sitting. As illustrated by the different configurations shown in Figs. 1A and 1B, the gaming device can be constructed with varying cabinet and display configurations.

In one embodiment, as illustrated in Fig. 2A, the gaming device preferably includes at least one processor 12, such as a microprocessor, a microcontroller-based platform, a suitable integrated circuit or one or more application-specific integrated circuits (ASIC's). The processor is in communication with or operable to access or to exchange signals with at least one data storage or memory device 14. In one embodiment, the processor and the memory device reside within the cabinet of the gaming device. The memory device stores program code and instructions, executable by the processor, to control the gaming device. The memory device also stores other data such as image data, event data, player input data, random or pseudo-random number generators, pay-table data or other operating data, information and applicable game rules that relate to the play of the gaming device. In

another embodiment, the memory device includes random access memory (RAM). In one embodiment, the memory device includes read only memory (ROM). In a further embodiment, the memory device includes flash memory and/or EEPROM (electrically erasable programmable read only memory). Any
5 other suitable magnetic, optical and/or semiconductor memory may be implemented in conjunction with the gaming device of the present invention.

In one embodiment, part or all of the program code and/or operating data described above can be stored in a detachable or removable memory device, including, but not limited to, a suitable cartridge, disk or CD ROM. A
10 player can use such a removable memory device in a desktop, a laptop personal computer, a personal digital assistant (PDA) or other computerized platform. The processor and memory device may be collectively referred to herein as a "computer" or "controller."

In one embodiment, as discussed in more detail below, the gaming
15 device randomly generates awards and/or other game outcomes based on probability data. That is, each award or other game outcome is associated with a probability and the gaming device generates the award or other game outcome to be provided to the player based on the associated probabilities. In this embodiment, since the gaming device generates outcomes randomly or
20 based upon a probability calculation, there is no certainty that the gaming device will provide the player with any specific award or other game outcome.

In another embodiment, as discussed in more detail below, the gaming device employs a predetermined or finite set or pool of awards or other game outcomes. In this embodiment, as each award or other game outcome is
25 provided to the player, the gaming device removes the provided award or other game outcome from the predetermined set or pool. Once removed from the set or pool, the specific provided award or other game outcome cannot be provided to the player again. In this type of embodiment, the gaming device provides players with all of the available awards or other game outcomes over
30 the course of the play cycle and guarantees a designated amount of actual wins and losses.

In one embodiment, as illustrated in Fig. 2A, the gaming device includes one or more display devices controlled by the processor. The display devices are preferably connected to or mounted to the cabinet of the gaming device. The embodiment shown in Fig. 1A includes a central display device 16 which
5 displays a primary game. This display device may also display any suitable secondary game associated with the primary game as well as information relating to the primary or secondary game. The alternative embodiment shown in Fig. 1B includes a central display device 16 and an upper display device 18. The upper display device may display the primary game, any suitable
10 secondary game associated with the primary game and/or information relating to the primary or secondary game. As seen in Figs. 1A and 1B, in one embodiment, the gaming device includes a credit display 20 which displays a player's current number of credits, cash, account balance or the equivalent. In one embodiment, the gaming device includes a bet display 22 which displays a
15 player's amount wagered.

The display devices may include, without limitation, a monitor, a television display, a plasma display, a liquid crystal display (LCD), a display based on light emitting diodes (LED) or any other suitable electronic device or display mechanism. In one embodiment, as described in more detail below,
20 the display device includes a touch-screen with an associated touch-screen controller. The display devices may be of any suitable configuration, such as a square, a rectangle or an elongated rectangle.

The display devices of the gaming device are configured to display at least one and preferably a plurality of games or other suitable images, symbols
25 and indicia such as any visual representation or exhibition of the movement of objects such as mechanical, virtual or video reels and wheels, dynamic lighting, video images and images of people, characters, places, things and faces of cards, tournament advertisements, promotions and the like.

In one alternative embodiment, the symbols, images and indicia
30 displayed on or by the display device may be in mechanical form. That is, the display device may include any suitable electromechanical device which preferably moves one or more mechanical objects, such as one or more

mechanical rotatable wheels, reels or dice, configured to display at least one and preferably a plurality of games or other suitable images, symbols or indicia.

As illustrated in Fig. 2A, in one embodiment, the gaming device includes at least one payment acceptor 24 in communication with the processor. As seen in Figs. 1A and 1B, the payment acceptor may include a coin slot 26 and a payment, note or bill acceptor 28, where the player inserts money, coins or tokens. The player can place coins in the coin slot or paper money, ticket or voucher into the payment, note or bill acceptor. In other embodiments, devices such as readers or validators for credit cards, debit cards, data cards or credit slips could be used for accepting payment. In one embodiment, a player may insert an identification card into a card reader of the gaming device. In one embodiment, the identification card is a smart card having a programmed microchip or a magnetic strip coded with a player's identification, credit totals and other relevant information. In one embodiment, money may be transferred to a gaming device through electronic funds transfer. When a player funds the gaming device, the processor determines the amount of funds entered and the corresponding amount is shown on the credit or other suitable display as described above.

As seen in Figs. 1A, 1B and 2A, in one embodiment the gaming device includes at least one and preferably a plurality of input devices 30 in communication with the processor. The input devices can include any suitable device which enables the player to produce an input signal which is read by the processor. In one embodiment, after appropriate funding of the gaming device, the input device is a game activation device, such as a pull arm 32 or a play button 34 which is used by the player to start any primary game or sequence of events in the gaming device. The play button can be any suitable play activator such as a bet one button, a max bet button or a repeat the bet button. In one embodiment, upon appropriate funding, the gaming device begins the game play automatically. In another embodiment, upon the player engaging one of the play buttons, the gaming device automatically activates game play.

In one embodiment, as shown in Figs. 1A and 1B, one input device is a bet one button 36. The player places a bet by pushing the bet one button. The player can increase the bet by one credit each time the player pushes the bet one button. When the player pushes the bet one button, the number of credits shown in the credit display preferably decreases by one, and the number of credits shown in the bet display preferably increases by one. In another embodiment, one input device is a bet max button (not shown) which enables the player to bet the maximum wager permitted for a game associated with the gaming device.

10 In one embodiment, one input device is a cash out button 38. The player may push the cash out button and cash out to receive a cash payment or other suitable form of payment corresponding to the number of remaining credits. In one embodiment, when the player cashes out, the player receives the coins or tokens in a coin payout tray 40. In one embodiment, when the
15 player cashes out, the player may receive other payout mechanisms such as tickets or credit slips which are redeemable by a cashier or funded to the player's electronically recordable identification card.

In one embodiment, as mentioned above and seen in Fig. 2A, one input device is a touch-screen 42 coupled with a touch-screen controller 44, or some
20 other touch-sensitive display overlay to allow for player interaction with the images on the display. The touch-screen and the touch-screen controller are connected to a video controller 46. A player can make decisions and input signals into the gaming device by touching the touch-screen at the appropriate places.

25 The gaming device may further include a plurality of communication ports for enabling communication of the processor with external peripherals, such as external video sources, expansion buses, game or other displays, an SCSI port or a key pad.

In one embodiment, as seen in Fig. 2A, the gaming device includes a
30 sound generating device controlled by one or more sound cards 48 which function in conjunction with the processor. In one embodiment, the sound generating device includes at least one and preferably a plurality of speakers

50 or other sound generating hardware and/or software for generating sounds, such as playing music for the primary and/or secondary game or for other modes of the gaming device, such as an attract mode. In one embodiment, the gaming device provides dynamic sounds coupled with attractive multimedia images displayed on one or more of the display devices to provide an audio-visual representation or to otherwise display full-motion video with sound to attract players to the gaming device. During idle periods, the gaming device may display a sequence of audio and/or visual attraction messages to attract potential players to the gaming device. The videos may also be customized for or to provide any appropriate information.

In one embodiment, the gaming machine may include a player or other sensor, such as a camera in communication with the processor (and possibly controlled by the processor) that is selectively positioned to acquire an image of a player actively using the gaming device and/or the surrounding area of the gaming device. In one embodiment, the camera may be configured to selectively acquire still or moving (e.g., video) images and may be configured to acquire the images in either an analog, digital or other suitable format. The display device may be configured to display the image acquired by the camera as well as display the visible manifestation of the game in split screen or picture-in-picture fashion. For example, the camera may acquire an image of the player and that image can be incorporated into the primary and/or secondary game as a game image, symbol or indicia.

The gaming device can incorporate any suitable wagering primary or base game. The gaming machine or device of the present invention may include some or all of the features of conventional gaming machines or devices. The primary or base game may comprise any suitable reel-type game, card game, number game or other game of chance susceptible to representation in an electronic or electromechanical form which produces a random outcome based on probability data upon activation of the game from a wager made by the player. That is, different primary wagering games, such as video poker games, video blackjack games, video keno, video bingo or any

other suitable primary or base game may be implemented into the present invention.

In one embodiment, as illustrated in Figs. 1A and 1B, a base or primary game may be a slot game with one or more paylines 52. The paylines may be horizontal, vertical, circular, diagonal, angled or any combination thereof. In this embodiment, the gaming device displays at least one reel and preferably a plurality of reels 54, such as three to five reels, in either electromechanical form with mechanical rotating reels or in video form with simulated reels and movement thereof. In one embodiment, an electromechanical slot machine includes a plurality of adjacent, rotatable wheels which may be combined and operably coupled with an electronic display of any suitable type. In another embodiment, if the reels are in video form, the plurality of simulated video reels are displayed on one or more of the display devices as described above. Each reel displays a plurality of indicia such as bells, hearts, fruits, numbers, letters, bars or other images which preferably correspond to a theme associated with the gaming device. In this embodiment, the gaming device awards prizes when the reels of the primary game stop spinning if specified types and/or configurations of indicia or symbols occur on an active pay line or otherwise occur in a winning combination or pattern.

In one embodiment, a base or primary game may be a poker game wherein the gaming device enables the player to play a conventional game of video poker and initially deals five cards, all face up, from a virtual deck of fifty-two cards. Cards may be dealt as in a traditional game of cards or in the case of the gaming device, the cards may be randomly selected from a predetermined number of cards. If the player wishes to draw, the player selects the cards to hold by using one or more input devices, such as pressing related hold buttons or touching a corresponding area on a touch-screen. After the player presses the deal button, the processor of the gaming device removes the unwanted or discarded cards from the display and deals replacement cards from the remaining cards in the deck. This results in a final five-card hand. The processor of the gaming device compares the final five-card hand to a payout table which utilizes conventional poker hand rankings to

determine the winning hands. An award based on a winning hand and the credits wagered is provided to the player.

In another embodiment, the base or primary game may be a multi-hand version of video poker. In this embodiment, the player is dealt at least two
5 hands of cards. In one such embodiment, the cards in all of the dealt hands are the same cards. In one embodiment each hand of cards is associated with its own deck of cards. The player chooses the cards to hold in a primary hand. The held cards in the primary hand are also held in the other hands of cards. The remaining non-held cards are removed from each displayed hand and
10 replaced with randomly dealt cards. Since the replacement cards are randomly dealt independently for each hand, the replacement cards will usually be different for each hand. The poker hand rankings are then determined hand by hand and awards are provided to the player.

In one embodiment, a base or primary game may be a keno game
15 wherein the gaming device displays a plurality of selectable indicia or numbers on at least one of the display devices. In this embodiment, the player selects at least one and preferably a plurality of the selectable indicia or numbers by using an input device or by using the touch-screen. The gaming device then displays a series of drawn numbers to determine an amount of matches, if any,
20 between the player's selected numbers and the gaming device's drawn numbers. The player is provided an award, if any, based on the amount of determined matches.

In one embodiment, in addition to winning credits in a base or primary game, the gaming device may also give players the opportunity to win credits
25 in a bonus or secondary game or bonus or secondary round. The bonus or secondary game enables the player to obtain a bonus prize or payout in addition to the prize or payout, if any, obtained from the base or primary game. In general, a bonus or secondary game produces a significantly higher level of player excitement than the base or primary game because it provides a greater
30 expectation of winning than the base or primary game and is accompanied with more attractive or unusual features than the base or primary game.

In one embodiment, the bonus or secondary game may be any type of suitable game, either similar to or completely different from the base or primary game. In one embodiment, the gaming device includes a program code which causes the processor to automatically begin a bonus round when the player
5 has achieved a triggering event, a qualifying condition or other designated game event in the base or primary game. In one embodiment, the triggering event or qualifying condition may be a selected outcome in the primary game or a particular arrangement of one or more indicia on a display device in the primary game, such as the number seven appearing on three adjacent reels
10 along a payline in the primary slot game embodiment seen in Figs. 1A and 1B. In another embodiment, the triggering event or qualifying condition may be triggered by exceeding a certain amount of game play (number of games, number of credits, amount of time), earning a specified number of points during game play or as a random award.

15 In one embodiment, once a player has qualified for a bonus game, the player may subsequently enhance their bonus game participation by returning to the base or primary game for continued play. Thus, for each bonus qualifying event, such as a bonus symbol, that the player obtains, a given number of bonus game wagering points or credits may be accumulated in a
20 "bonus meter" programmed to accrue the bonus wagering credits or entries toward eventual participation in a bonus game. The occurrence of multiple bonus qualifying events in the primary game may result in an arithmetic or geometric increase in the number of bonus wagering credits awarded. In one embodiment, extra bonus wagering credits may be redeemed during the bonus
25 game to extend play of the bonus game.

In one embodiment, no separate entry fee or buy in for a bonus game need be employed. That is, a player may not purchase an entry into a bonus game. The player must win or earn entry through play of the primary game, thereby encouraging play of the primary game. In another embodiment,
30 qualification of the bonus or secondary game could be accomplished through a simple "buy in" by the player if, for example, the player has been unsuccessful at qualifying for the bonus game through other specified activities.

In one embodiment, as illustrated in Fig. 2B, one or more of the gaming devices 10 of the present invention may be connected to a data network or a remote communication link 58 with some or all of the functions of each gaming device provided at a central location such as a central server or central controller 56. More specifically, the processor of each gaming device may be designed to facilitate transmission of signals between the individual gaming device and the central server or controller.

In one embodiment, the game outcome provided to the player is determined by a central server or controller and provided to the player at the gaming device of the present invention. In this embodiment, each of a plurality of such gaming devices are in communication with the central server or controller. Upon a player initiating game play at one of the gaming devices, the initiated gaming device communicates a game outcome request to the central server or controller.

In one embodiment, the central server or controller receives the game outcome request and randomly generates a game outcome for the primary game based on probability data. In another embodiment, the central server or controller randomly generates a game outcome for the secondary game based on probability data. In another embodiment, the central server or controller randomly generates a game outcome for both the primary game and the secondary game based on probability data. In this embodiment, the central server or controller is capable of storing and utilizing program code or other data similar to the processor and memory device of the gaming device.

In an alternative embodiment, the central server or controller maintains one or more predetermined pools or sets of predetermined game outcomes. In this embodiment, the central server or controller receives the game outcome request and independently selects a predetermined game outcome from a set or pool of game outcomes. The central server or controller flags or marks the selected game outcome as used. Once a game outcome is flagged as used, it is prevented from further selection from the set or pool and cannot be selected by the central controller or server upon another wager. The provided game outcome can include a primary game outcome, a secondary game outcome,

primary and secondary game outcomes, or a series of game outcomes such as free games.

The central server or controller communicates the generated or selected game outcome to the initiated gaming device. The gaming device
5 receives the generated or selected game outcome and provides the game outcome to the player. In an alternative embodiment, how the generated or selected game outcome is to be presented or displayed to the player, such as a reel symbol combination of a slot machine or a hand of cards dealt in a card
10 game, is also determined by the central server or controller and communicated to the initiated gaming device to be presented or displayed to the player. Central production or control can assist a gaming establishment or other entity in maintaining appropriate records, controlling gaming, reducing and/or preventing cheating or electronic or other errors, reducing or eliminating win-loss volatility and the like.

15 In another embodiment, one or more of the gaming devices of the present invention are in communication with a central server or controller for monitoring purposes only. That is, each individual gaming device randomly generates the game outcomes to be provided to the player and the central server or controller monitors the activities and events occurring on the plurality
20 of gaming devices. In one embodiment, the gaming network includes a real-time or an on-line accounting and gaming information system operably coupled to the central server or controller. The accounting and gaming information system of this embodiment includes a player database for storing player profiles, a player tracking module for tracking players and a credit system for
25 providing automated casino transactions.

A plurality of the gaming devices of the present invention are capable of being connected to a data network. In one embodiment, the data network is a local area network (LAN), in which one or more of the gaming devices are substantially proximate to each other and an on-site central server or controller
30 as in, for example, a gaming establishment or a portion of a gaming establishment. In another embodiment, the data network is a wide area network (WAN) in which one or more of the gaming devices are in

communication with at least one off-site central server or controller. In this embodiment, the plurality of gaming devices may be located in a different part of the gaming establishment or within a different gaming establishment than the off-site central server or controller. Thus, the WAN may include an off-site
5 central server or controller and an off-site gaming device located within gaming establishments in the same geographic area, such as a city or state. The WAN gaming system of the present invention may be substantially identical to the LAN gaming system described above, although the number of gaming devices in each system may vary relative to each other.

10 In another embodiment, the data network is an internet or intranet. In this embodiment, the operation of the gaming device can be viewed at the gaming device with at least one internet browser. In this embodiment, operation of the gaming device and accumulation of credits may be accomplished with only a connection to the central server or controller (the
15 internet/intranet server or webserver) through a conventional phone or other data transmission line, digital signal line (DSL), T-1 line, coaxial cable, fiber optic cable, wireless gateway or other suitable connection. In this embodiment, players may access an internet game page from any location where an internet connection and computer, or other internet facilitator are
20 available. The expansion in the number of computers and number and speed of internet connections in recent years increases opportunities for players to play from an ever-increasing number of remote sites. It should be appreciated that enhanced bandwidth of digital wireless communications may render such technology suitable for some or all communications according to the present
25 invention, particularly if such communications are encrypted. Higher data transmission speeds may be useful for enhancing the sophistication and response of the display and interaction with the player.

In another embodiment, a plurality of gaming devices at one or more gaming sites may be networked to a central server in a progressive
30 configuration, as known in the art, wherein a portion of each wager to initiate a base or primary game may be allocated to bonus or secondary event awards. In one embodiment, a host site computer is coupled to a plurality of the central

servers at a variety of mutually remote gaming sites for providing a multi-site linked progressive automated gaming system. In one embodiment, a host site computer may serve gaming devices distributed throughout a number of properties at different geographical locations including, for example, different
5 locations within a city or different cities within a state.

In one embodiment, the host site computer is maintained for the overall operation and control of the system. In this embodiment, a host site computer oversees the entire progressive gaming system and is the master for computing all progressive jackpots. All participating gaming sites report to,
10 and receive information from, the host site computer. Each central server computer is responsible for all data communication between the gaming device hardware and software and the host site computer.

Multiple Game Interfaces

In one embodiment, the present invention enables the player to
15 selectively choose the display interface that the gaming device displays to the player. As will be discussed below, the interfaces in one embodiment each relate to each other and each relate to a theme of the gaming device. For purposes of illustration, the theme in the illustrated embodiment is that of the "The Price is Right™" game show. It should be appreciated that other types of
20 themes are contemplated, such as movie themes, book themes, famous people, famous historical events, famous music, famous musicians, famous bands, famous and infamous characters as well as other suitable game themes.

Figs. 3A to 3C illustrate one embodiment, wherein different interfaces
25 are displayed for the same game having the same payout structure or payable. As will be discussed in much more detail below, Figs. 3A to 3C each display the same game. In slot, for example, the different interfaces each display a game with the same variety of symbols, wherein each symbol is provided in the same proportion for each interface and each corresponding
30 symbol of the different interfaces has the same function with respect to the payable. The paytables for each interface have a corresponding or like

winning symbol or symbol combination, wherein each of those symbols or combinations yields the same payout for each interface.

Fig. 3A illustrates the Cliffhanger™ game interface. Fig. 3B illustrates the Punch-a-Bunch™ game interface. Fig. 3C illustrates the Plinko™ game interface. Each of those games is a sub-game or title under the main theme of gaming device 10, namely, the Price is Right™ game show.

The Cliffhanger™ interface 60 has a color and design 62 that is different but related to the color and design 72 of the Punch-a-Bunch™ game interface 70 and the color and design 82 of the Plinko™ game interface 80. In one embodiment, the designs or visual features of designs 62, 72 and 82 are the same, but the color scheme changes for each of those designs. Each of the interfaces 60, 70 and 80 includes reels 54. The Cliffhanger™ game interface 60 includes reels 54a, the Punch-a-Bunch™ game interface 70 includes reels 54b, and the Plinko™ game interface 80 includes reels 54c (reels 54a to 54c are referred to herein collectively as reels 54). Reels 54a to 54c are the same from the standpoint that each set includes the same number of total symbols and that analogous symbols are provided in the same proportion and in the same order or positions on reels 54 with the same blanks between the symbols. Reels 54a to 54c on the other hand differ in that the indicia for at least some of the symbols is different, as described in detail below. In these embodiments, a plurality of or all of the symbols are different in the different interfaces.

Each of the interfaces 60, 70 and 80 also includes a change interface input 64. Change interface input 64 in the illustrated embodiment is an area of display device 16 or 18 that cooperates with the touch screen 42 and touch screen controller 44 to send a signal to processor 12. In an alternative embodiment, change interface button 64 is an electromechanical input device, such as buttons 34, 36 and 38. The change interface input 64 enables the player to selectively designate and operate gaming device 10 with a desired interface 60, 70 or 80.

In one embodiment, change interface input 64 toggles between the three interfaces 60, 70 and 80. In an alternative embodiment, a separate

interface input can be provided for each of the interfaces 60, 70 and 80, which allows the player to simply press the button of a desired interface to change game operation from the current interface to the new interface. Further, as discussed below, gaming device 10 in one embodiment provides a selectable
5 call-up menu, e.g., a payable, that displays each of the possible interfaces 60 to 80 to the player and enables the player within that menu to select an interface.

It should be appreciated that any suitable number of different interfaces may be provided. In the illustrated embodiment, the game provides three
10 different interfaces. In other embodiments, two or more than three interfaces are provided. Still further, gaming device 10 can have an overall game theme including sub-themes. The sub-themes can themselves have multiple interfaces. For example, a gaming device having a movie theme can have sub-themes, each of which constitute different parts of the movie. The
15 interfaces can then each relate to a particular moment or scene within one of the sub-themes or portions of the movie.

Interfaces 60 to 80 also include a number of inputs and displays that are specific and common to slot machines. For instance, interfaces 60 to 80 show a select lines input 66 that enables the player to input a number of paylines on
20 which to place a wager. Typical slot machines can have from one to twenty-five paylines. In the illustrated embodiment, the gaming device has nine paylines, as indicated by the nine boxes placed on either side of reels 54. Indicator 68 indicates that the player has currently selected to wager all nine paylines. While input 66 and indicator 68 are shown as being simulated on
25 one of the display devices 16 and 18, it should be appreciated that those items are alternatively provided elsewhere on the cabinet of gaming device 10 in the form of an electromechanical button or indicator. Such is the case with any of the inputs and indicators described hereafter.

In connection with the select lines input 66, interfaces 60 to 80 also
30 include a bet per line input 74 and a line bet indicator 76. The player is able to place different wagers on the lines that have been enabled or wagered upon. The player toggles through the different wagers per paylines via the bet per

line input 74. The current bet per payline is shown as three credits per payline in indicator 76. Indicator 76 is also provided in the nine boxes on either side of reels 54, wherein each box represents a different one of the nine total paylines. Here again, those boxes indicate that the player has wagered three credits per payline.

Interfaces 60 to 80 also show a max bet input 78. Max bet input 78 enables the player to press one button and make the highest possible wager for the game. In one embodiment, the highest possible wager per line is five credits. Therefore, the player has currently wagered twenty-seven credits, as shown in total bet meter 84, out of a total of forty-five possible credits.

Interfaces 60 to 80 also provide a spin or play input 34 in simulated form, which begins play of the game as described above. A win meter 86 is also shown, which shows the player a number of credits or an amount of money achieved after every spin of the reels. It should be appreciated that for nine payline, multiple wager per payline games such as those of interfaces 60 to 80, it is possible for the player to win an amount that is less than the player's wager. For example, the player could wager forty-five credits and win only five credits.

The interfaces 60 to 80 also include a help/see pays input 88. Input 88 enables the player to see menu driven screens that are displayed in place of the interfaces 60 to 80. The "help" portion of the menu screens describe certain features of the game, such as the meaning of "total bet", how to use the mechanical buttons and how to start the game. The help menu also explains the operation of other inputs, such as the cash out button 38, the see pays input 88, select paylines input 66, bet per payline input 74, max bet input 78, the spin or play button 34 as well as other necessary items.

The see pays input 88 results in one embodiment in the display on display device 16, 18 of the information illustrated in Fig. 5. The information illustrated in Fig. 5 shows a menu 90 that enables the player to select the Cliffhanger™ game interface 60, the Punch-a-Bunch™ game interface 70 or the Plinko™ game interface 80. The see pays menu 90 also shows each of the symbols displayed on reels 54 associated with each of the interfaces 60 to

80. Moreover, the see pays menu 90 in Fig. 5 shows each of the different payouts for achieving one or more of certain of the symbols on the reels 54.

Figs. 3A to 3C show the same game outcome displayed on three different interfaces 60 to 80. That is, reels 54 have spun and stopped revealing symbols that each generate the same outcome for the player. The symbols of the interfaces 60, 70 and 80 are either the same symbols or are corresponding or related symbols. For example, the two symbols in the upper left hand corner of each of the reel outputs of the interfaces 60, 70 and 80 each show the same Showcase Showdown™ symbol 175. That symbol represents a bonus game symbol common to each interface, which possibly takes the player to a bonus game. In other embodiments, a same symbol, such as symbol 175, is part of a winning symbol combination or is a winning symbol by itself.

Following along the top row of symbols of the reels 54 and interfaces 60, 70 and 80, the symbol 160h of interface 60 is related to the symbol 170h of interface 70, which are both related to symbol 180h of interface 80. That is, if the player receives symbol 160h on a particular reel 54a and in a particular position on that reel, that player would have received symbol 170h in the same position and on the like reel 54b if the player would have been playing interface 70. The function of these symbols is the same in regard to the payable. Likewise, the player would have received symbol 180h on the like reel 54c and in the same position on that reel if the player had been playing interface 80.

In the same manner, the symbol 160f of interface 60 in the top row of the fourth reel is related to symbol 170f in the like position of interface 70, which are both related to symbol 180f in the like position of interface 80. The function of these symbols is the same in regard to the payable. Symbol 160c in the upper right hand corner of the reels 54a using interface 60 is related to symbol 170c in the like position of interface 70 and is related to symbol 180c in the like position of interface 80. The function of these symbols is the same in regard to the payable.

The remaining rows of symbols on the reels 54 of interfaces 60, 70 and 80 are also either the same or related. The symbols in order 160f, 160e, 160e, 165 and 160e of the middle row in interface 60 are related to or correspond to symbols 170f, 170e, 170e, 170h and 170e, respectively, of interface 70.

- 5 Those two middle rows of symbols are likewise related to symbols 180f, 180e, 180e, 180h and 180e of the middle row of interface 80, respectively. The function of these symbols is the same in regard to the paytable.

The bottom row of the symbols of the outcomes of the reels 54 in the different interfaces 60, 70 and 80 are also related. That is, symbols 160h, 160d, 160i, 160d and 160d of interface 60 are related respectively to the
10 outcome of the bottom row of symbols, namely, symbols 170h, 170d, 170i, 170d and 170d of interface 70. Moreover, those bottom rows of symbols are in turn related to symbols 180h, 180d, 180i, 180d and 180d of the bottom row of symbols on the outcome of the reels 54c for interface 80. The function of
15 these symbols is the same in regard to the paytable.

Referring now to Figs. 4A to 4C, the symbols on the reel strips of Fig. 5 that are not shown in Figs. 3A to 3C are illustrated to complete the sets of symbols shown in the see pays menu 90 of Fig. 5. Figs. 4A to 4C illustrate an outcome from a different play of the game than the outcome shown in Figs. 3A
20 to 3C. The outcome of the game is the again the same in each of the Figs. 4A to 4C. The difference is that the player sees different symbols and different designs and colors depending on which interface 60, 70 or 80 that the player chooses to use. The player wins or loses the same amount regardless of which interface the player chooses.

25 Figs. 4A to 4C illustrate the symbol 160b, which is related to symbol 170b and 180b, which are each located in the top position on the second reel of the reels 54a, 54b and 54c, respectively. Likewise, related symbols 160g, 170g and 180g are located on the second position of the second reel of related reels 54a, 54b and 54c. The symbol 160a is related to symbol 170a and
30 symbol 180a, which are each shown on the upper position of the fifth reel of reels 54a, 54b and 54c, respectively. Those symbols complete and show each of the symbols of the paytable and menu 90 shown in Fig. 5.

The related symbols are provided in the same amount on each of the reels 54. Moreover, the relative placement of the different symbols on the reels 54 is the same for each interface 60, 70 and 80. It does not therefore matter which interface the player plays in terms of the outcome of the game in the illustrated embodiment. The player plays the interface that provides the most fun and enjoyment to the player, at least at a certain period of time. The player may for example feel that one of the interfaces is luckier than the remaining interfaces. In reality, the odds are exactly the same regardless which interface the player plays. The player may also prefer the symbols of one of the interfaces 60, 70 or 80 versus another. Moreover, a color scheme of one interface may be more appealing to the player than another color scheme or design. This makes the gaming machine more entertaining and interesting for the player by allowing the player to select the interface and change interfaces as the player desires.

The present invention also expressly contemplates having a different sound track for the different interfaces 60, 70 and 80. In that manner, one of the sound tracks may be preferred by the player versus the other available sound tracks. The overall theme and feel of a particular interface (visual and audio) can also be appealing to the player with respect to other interfaces. Finally, the player may simply grow to enjoy, know and therefore prefer a particular interface versus another such interface. This also provides the player with more interaction with the gaming device.

The interfaces also add variety to the gaming experience. If the player does not win credits or money after a number of successive game plays, the present invention provides the player with an opportunity to change the interface. If the player experiences success after changing the interface, the process of changing interfaces can become a desirable remedy to the player who wishes to try to change his or her luck. The interface change therefore provides a method and apparatus for increasing the overall fun and enjoyment associated with gaming.

Referring now to Fig. 5, a payable 90 is illustrated. Paytable 90 includes each of the symbols described above for each of the interfaces 60, 70

and 80. Paytable 90 also includes an input device 92, 94 and 96 for each interface 60, 70 and 80, respectively. As illustrated, symbols 165 and 175 are common to each of the interfaces 60, 70 and 80. Other symbols include related indicia. For example, symbols 160a to 160d each correspond to symbols 170a to 170d and symbols 180a to 180d. Each of those symbols includes indicia of a character or person. When the player changes interfaces, the character symbol of one interface is replaced by a character symbol of the next interface. If the interface is changed again to the third interface, a new character is substituted.

One embodiment of the present invention also includes other symbols which are related by functionality. For example, each of the symbols 160i, 170i and 180i, which have different indicia, each are involved with triggering a bonus game. Symbols 175, which on the other hand are common for each of the interfaces, trigger a common bonus game. The present invention therefore includes a bonus game triggered by a symbol belonging to each of the interfaces or by a symbol specific to each of the interfaces. In the illustrated embodiment, in which the average expected value of the game is the same regardless of which interface the player chooses, the bonus game for the symbols 160i, 170i and 180i is either the same bonus game regardless of which interface the player plays or is a bonus game specific to one of the interfaces, but which has the same average expected value as bonus games associated with the other interfaces. By structuring the bonus games and bonusing in such a manner, the player is not rewarded or punished for playing with any particular interface.

Symbol 165, which is common to each of the interfaces 60, 70 and 80 provides the same function, namely, acts as a wild symbol in each of the interfaces. Symbol 165 operates alternatively as a standard symbol, which alone or in combination yields one or more winning combinations.

Still other related symbols of interfaces 60, 70 and 80 have different or unrelated types of indicia. For example, symbol 160g is a flower, while symbols 170g and 180g are fruits, namely, a lemon and orange respectively. The game implementer can therefore provide consistency between certain

symbols of the different interfaces but at the same time add variety to one or more other symbols of the interfaces.

Paytable 90 also displays a payout portion 100, which shows the pays 102 associated with the combinations 104. As is common with slot, the payouts each begin on the leftmost reel and proceed across the second to fifth reels. The combinations 104 for the wild symbol 165 show that four credits are provided for a single wild symbol 165 appearing on the leftmost reel, twenty-five credits are provided for two wild symbols appearing consecutively on the first two reels, two hundred credits are provided for three wild symbols 165 appearing consecutively on three reels, one thousand credits are provided for four wild symbols appearing consecutively on four reels and five thousand credits are provided for five wild symbols appearing on all five reels.

A message provided in conjunction with the pays 102 indicates that nine thousand credits are provided if five wild symbols 165 appear on the ninth payline. Each of the payouts for the remaining symbols proceeds in a similar manner to symbols 165 but yield different pays 102. For certain symbols, at least three of the symbols must appear consecutively. For other symbols, two symbols must appear consecutively. The important point for the present invention is that the pays are each the same in the illustrated embodiment and are common to each interface 60, 70 and 80. Further, each interface includes the same amount of different symbols, namely, eleven different symbols in the illustrated embodiment. More or less than eleven symbols can alternatively be used. Further, winning combinations can be provided that include more than one different symbol from the same interface, which combination would then correspond to combinations in the remaining interfaces.

Although not illustrated in paytable 90, it should be appreciated that as stated above, each of the symbols of the different reel strips is provided in the same amount and in the same order on each of the reels. The game in the illustrated embodiment is therefore the same game regardless of which interface 60, 70 and 80 the player plays. To that end, payout menu 90 displays the interface selectors 92, 94 and 96 that enable the player from menu 90 to choose a desired interface for play.

Referring now to Figs. 6 to 8, various methods for playing a game using the changeable interfaces of the present invention are illustrated. Fig. 6 illustrates a method 110 in which the player toggles an input device, such as device 64 discussed above, until the player reaches the desired interface.

5 Method 130 of Fig. 7 illustrates an alternative embodiment, wherein the player presses a button dedicated to the desired interface, such as input devices 92 to 96 described above, to operate the game using the desired interface. Fig. 8 illustrates a method 150 that alternatively allows for gaming device 10 to automatically change an interface. Method 150 also illustrates that the player
10 in one embodiment can override the gaming device's decision to change interfaces.

In method 110, upon starting the method as indicated by oval 112, the player inputs an appropriate wagerable amount or already has enough credits inputted into the gaming device to place a wager, as indicated by block 114.
15 Next, gaming device 10 displays the game having one of the game's interfaces, as indicated by block 116.

In method 110, gaming device 10 enables the player to input whether to change the displayed interface, as indicated by diamond 118. If the player does input to change the interface, the game confirms such change, as
20 indicated by block 120 and displays the game with a new one of the game's interfaces as indicated by block 116. The loop created by block 116, diamond 118 and block 120 is repeated, i.e., the player toggles through the available interfaces until the player does not input to change an interface and instead presses the play or spin button, as indicated by block 122.

25 Upon the play or spin input, gaming device 10 displays the game and generates a game outcome. A game log located in memory device 40 stores, for example, which interface is used for that previous play, the wager made and the game outcome, as indicated by block 124. Next, gaming device 10 determines whether the player decides to play again, as indicated by diamond
30 126. If the player does not play again, the method 110 ends as indicated by block 128. If the player does play again the player inputs the appropriate wager or has credits remaining enough to play the game, as indicated by block

114. The loop created by block 114 and diamond 126 is repeated until the player determines not to play again.

Referring now to Fig. 7, a method 130 illustrates an alternative embodiment, wherein the player presses a button dedicated to the particular interface desired. Upon starting the method as indicated by oval 132, the player inputs an appropriate wager or has credits remaining enough to play the game, as indicated by block 134. Next, gaming device 10 displays the game with one of the game's interfaces and also displays an input device for each interface, as indicated by block 136. In one embodiment, gaming device 10 displays the see pays input 88 that enables the player to call up the payout menu 90 shown in Fig. 5. Payout menu 90 then displays the symbols of the different interfaces 60, 70 and 80. Menu 90 also displays the interface selectors 92, 94 and 96.

The player can in method 130 peruse or view each of the symbols displayed for each of the interfaces and then pick one of the interfaces by selecting one of the inputs 92 to 96. Alternatively or additionally to the see pays input 88, the inputs 92 to 96 are provided on the game screens, such as the screens in Figs. 3A to 4C. Further alternatively, the interface buttons 92 to 96 are provided as electromechanical inputs located on the gaming device chassis. In any case, the player can choose to go to directly to the game having a desired game interface via the selection of an input dedicated to that interface.

Gaming device 10 then determines whether the player selects a new interface as determined in connection with diamond 138. If the player does not select a new interface, gaming device 10 maintains the display of the same or old interface, as indicated by block 140 when the player presses the spin or play button, as indicated by block 142. If the player does select or choose a new interface, gaming device 10 displays the game having the new interface and informs the player of such change, as indicated by block 144.

When the player presses play, as indicated by block 142, gaming device displays a game outcome and logs the interface used, the wager made and the outcome, as indicated by block 146. If the player does not play again,

as indicated by diamond 148, the method ends, as indicated by oval 149. If the player does play again, as indicated by diamond 148, the player inputs an appropriate wager or has an appropriate amount of credits remaining on the gaming device, as indicated by block 134. The loop created between block 5 134 and diamond 148 is then repeated until the player decides not to play gaming device 10 again.

Referring now to Fig. 8, a method 150 is illustrated. Upon starting the method as indicated by oval 152, the player inputs an appropriate wager or has credits remaining on the gaming device already, as indicated by block 154. 10 Next, or at some point prior to the player pressing the player's spin button, gaming device 10 determines whether to display a different game interface, as indicated by diamond 156. If gaming device 10 does not decide to change the game's interface, gaming device 10 maintains the display of the previously displayed interface, as indicated by block 158. If the game does decide to 15 display a different interface, gaming device 10 displays the game having a new interface and informs the player of the change, as indicated by block 160.

Method 150 provides an option in which the player can override a change of interface made previously without player input, i.e., on the game's own initiative. That option in an alternative embodiment is not provided. The 20 next step in the method 150 is therefore to determine whether that option has been provided, as determined in connection with diamond 162. If that option is not provided, the game proceeds to the point where the player presses the play or spin button, as indicated by block 166.

If the player override option is provided, the next step is to determine 25 whether the player exercises the option, as indicated by diamond 164. If the player does not re-change the game interface, the game proceeds to allow the player to press the player spin button with the currently displayed interface, as indicated by block 166. If the player does change the game interface, gaming device 10 displays a new interface and informs the player of the interface 30 change, as indicated by block 168.

Ultimately, a game having a selected game interface is ready to be played, as indicated by block 166. After the player presses the player spin

button, gaming device 10 displays a game outcome and logs (for example) which interface has been used, the wager made and the outcome, as indicated by block 170.

Next, a determination is made whether the player plays the gaming device again, as indicated by diamond 172. If the player does not play the game again, method 150 ends, as indicated by oval 174. If the player does decide to play the game again, the player inputs an appropriate wagerable amount or has enough credits remaining to replay the game, as indicated by block 154. The loop created by and between block 154 and diamond 172 is repeated until the player no longer desires to play the game and the method ends as indicated by oval 174.

Method 150 presents a new feature contemplated the present invention, namely, that the interfaces can automatically change without a decision by the player to make the change. The present invention additionally contemplates various reasons or triggering mechanisms upon which the gaming device 10 decides to change the display interface. Some of those justifications are listed in Fig. 9. Fig. 9 is in no way intended to limit the scope of the invention to the justifications listed therein. Fig. 9 does however illustrate that there are many different reasons or justifications that gaming device 10 can use to decide to switch the game interfaces of the present invention.

In one embodiment, as indicated by entry 182, the switch is made randomly but is not made based upon a game event. For instance, gaming device 10 could simply store a weighted or non-weighted random generation device that operates completely independently of any function of the game, but which can determine randomly: (i) when to change interfaces, and (ii) to which interface to change. In one example, such random generation device is weighted so that the likelihood of changing interfaces increases at some linear or nonlinear rate over time. Again, entry 182 and any of the entries listed herein is in one embodiment combined with the override feature discussed in connection with method 150, which enables the player to override any random change of game interfaces by gaming device 10. The override allows the

player, for example, to switch back to an interface in which the player has enjoyed success or is otherwise desirable.

Entry 184 sets forth that the interface switch is alternatively made randomly based upon a game event. That is, a random game event occurs
5 that triggers the interface change. The random result can be any type of symbol or symbol combination appearing on an active or non-active payline. In another embodiment, the random game event is the incrementing of a meter, such as a persistence meter via the generation of a symbol or symbol combination on the reels 54. In still another embodiment, the random game
10 event is a result of a progressive game played in conjunction with the base game of slot that is triggered via the spinning of reels 54. The random event can also be a return from a bonus event or as a result of an event in a bonus game such as the picking of a selection in a bonus game.

Entry 186 shows that gaming device 10 can switch interfaces based on
15 the player's wager. The wager dependency can include the player's overall wager or a component thereof. For example, the interface displayed can depend upon the number of paylines wagered or the player's wager per payline. Alternatively, the player's total wager determines which of a plurality of interfaces is played. The dependency can be figured on a game by game
20 basis or accumulated over a plurality of game plays.

As indicated by entry 188, gaming device 10 switches interfaces alternatively based on an amount of credits accumulated or lost by the player. For example, if the player loses a certain percentage or amount of an initial amount of credits, gaming device 10 can automatically switch interfaces to try
25 to change the player's luck. Alternatively, if the player wins a certain amount, gaming device 10 can change interfaces to display a game interface, which is rarely displayed or seen by players. Such an interface provides an incentive to the player to continue gaming and attempt to win a certain amount and enjoy an interface that is normally not achieved by most players. The credits
30 accumulated and lost can be accounted for over a single game, multiple games or many games. The credits can be analyzed on a percent basis or on an actual credit basis.

Entry 190 indicates that gaming device 10 alternatively automatically switches interfaces based on a number of times that the player has played a game consecutively. For instance, gaming device 10 can display a first interface for the first fifty game plays, a second interface for the next fifty game plays and a third interface for the third fifty game plays, etc. Such switching occurs regardless of the player's wager and the player's level of success during previous game play.

Entry 192 indicates that a switch can be made automatically based on a tabulation maintained by a player tracking card. Many casinos offer player tracking cards that keep track of a number of games played and an amount wagered within a particular casino. The casinos then award the player for playing a certain number of games or wagering a certain amount. The present invention expressly contemplates using the tabulations kept by a player tracking card in combination with the interfaces of the present invention. For example, the player tracking card could have bronze, silver and gold levels based on different levels and amounts of game play. Gaming device 10 in turn displays an interface or interfaces specific to the bronze level, silver level or gold level, depending on the player's current level of play. Entry 192 enables the player to accumulate plays over time and over multiple plays of multiple different gaming devices and obtain a benefit for such accumulation.

Entry 194 changes the game play based on a game theme or a story line of thereof. For example, if the game theme involves a movie, gaming device 10 in one embodiment displays an interface based on a particular point or scene in the movie. The player for instance begins play of gaming device 10 with an interface having symbols and characters from or relating to an initial sequence or stage in the movie. After a certain number of plays, the interface switches automatically to show symbols from or relating to an early but intermediate point in the movie. As the player plays even more games, the game interface changes again to have symbols and characters from a middle portion of the movie. Still further plays of the game cause the gaming device to switch to symbols to correspond to an intermediate but latter portion of the movie. Still further plays of the game cause the game interface to change to

display symbols and characters that occur in or relate to an end portion of the movie.

The gaming device 10 can have more or less than five different interfaces used in the example above that correspond to five different points or stages in the movie or theme. As alluded to above, each stage or sub-theme can have more than one interface associated with same, wherein gaming device 10 generates randomly which interface per stage to display and use. Again, gaming device 10 in an embodiment enables the player to override the automatic switch of an interface and to allow the player to select and display an interface from a desired point in the story line of the theme.

The theme based switch is not limited to movie themes but instead can be any of the different types of themes described above. For example, if a gaming device has a theme related to a famous band or singer, the interfaces can change to correspond to a particular song performed by the band or singer. If the theme involves a particular historical event, the interfaces can change to display different known entities or qualities associated with that event. If the theme of the game alternatively corresponds to a particular type of sport, the different interfaces can correspond to different teams that play the featured sport. Thus, the interfaces can be divided chronologically, by subject matter, or by any other suitable defining feature that separates the theme into known and discernable components or sub-themes.

Referring now to Fig. 10, a number of possible variables that change with a change of interface are illustrated. In the embodiments described above, the interfaces have been independent of the game played. That is, the game is the same regardless of which interface is used, both in terms of an expected value of the game and a volatility of the game. As shown above, especially in connection with Fig. 5, the payout combinations are the same for each of the interfaces. The only change in connection with the interfaces is the display of new or different symbols. The present invention, however, expressly contemplates changing a game feature along with the change of an interface. Again, the table of Fig. 10 is not meant to limit the invention to the

listed items but to illustrate instead that the interfaces be accompanied by many different types of game variables.

Entry 202 shows that in one embodiment the volatility of the payable changes when the interface changes. That entry expressly contemplates the expected value of the paytables of the interfaces remaining constant or substantially constant. The changing volatility pertains to whether the gaming device provides smaller awards more often or larger awards more infrequently. Thus the player could start out by playing gaming device 10 with a first interface that provides awards of a smaller or moderate size but does so on a relatively frequent basis. As the player plays more and more games, the interface changes one or more times to interfaces and associated with higher payouts that are provided less frequently. The reverse could also be true, i.e., move from more volatile to less volatile. In an alternative embodiment, this can be based on an amount of credits on the credit meter. For instance more volatility for higher credits and less volatility for lower credits.

Entry 204 illustrates that the expected value can change by way of a change in payout percentage or a change in payouts in connection with a change of interfaces. Thus, repeated play could enable the player to play potentially better-paying games. Alternatively, higher payout percentage or expected value games can be provided along with a new interface after the player has lost a certain number of games or a certain amount of credits or coins. To that end, each of the entries 202 to 212 can be combined with any of the entries 182 to 194, so that any of the game variables of Fig. 10 can be combined with any of the automatic interface change triggers of Fig. 9.

It is not likely that gaming device 10 would allow a player to selectively change a game that is advertised to have a higher payout percentage or average expected value. It is, however, contemplated that such may be the case when that fact is not advertised, in which case the player may never be able to learn that, in fact, one game has a higher average expected value than another. The difference in average expected value is also expressly contemplated to be due to the different in average expected values in bonus games available in one interface versus a bonus game available in another

interface, or a bonus game available in one interface, wherein a lesser number or no bonus game is provided in another interface.

Entry 206 shows that a wager requirement or eligibility requirement for a game event can change upon a change of interfaces. For example, the wager requirement to activate or make the player eligible for a bonus game can change upon a change of interfaces. Likewise, the wager requirement to make the player eligible for winning a progressive payout can vary based on the game interface used. Moreover, the wager requirement to make the player eligible to increment an award meter, such as a persistence meter, can vary based on which interface the player plays. The entries 206 correspond somewhat to the entries of 204, which involve the payback percentage or expected value. Entries 206, on the other hand, effect the player's ability to be eligible to achieve a particular gaming device advantage, as opposed to a likelihood or percentage that the player will achieve such advantage.

Entry 208 illustrates that the symbol or symbols used to trigger a bonus game, progressive win, persistence meter increment, or any of the other game advantages listed in connection with entry 206, can change based on which interface is played. Thus, entry 204 deals emphasizes variability with respect to a payout for a particular type of gaming event. Entry 206 involves eligibility and entry 208 deals with the likelihood of achieving a gaming device advantage. It should also be appreciated that for each different interface, the bonus game(s) triggered can be different.

Entry 210 illustrates that the total number of different symbols between different game interfaces can change. For example, one interface can include ten different symbols, while another includes twelve, fifteen or other suitable amount of different symbols. The different numbers of different symbols can also yield different numbers and types of winning combinations.

Entry 212 indicates that different interfaces in one embodiment include a different proportion of a particular symbol or a different ordering of that symbol on the reel strips. For example, a particular symbol can be provided in a percentage of ten percent on a reel strip in a first interface, while that same symbol or a corresponding symbol is provided in a percentage of fifteen

percent on that same reel in a different interface. The same symbol or corresponding symbols in different interfaces can likewise be ordered differently or provided on reels upon which like symbols or corresponding symbols are not provided in certain interfaces. That latter difference can result in a win of perhaps up to three symbols in a row in one interface and up to four or five symbols in a row on another interface, wherein the symbols are the same or are corresponding between the two interfaces.

As discussed in connection with the methods 110, 130 and 150 of Figs. 7, 8 and 9, respectively, gaming device 10 employing the multiple interfaces 60, 70 and 80 also keeps a log of games that the player can review if the player has a question about a prior game result. In one implementation, the gaming device stores the previous ten game plays. The gaming device stores information such as, the player's wager, the wager components, the outcome on each payline and the total outcome, e.g., player wins nothing, player wins less than wager, player wins wager amount or player wins more than wager amount. In one embodiment, the log also records the particular interface used in each game. The player can therefore review which interface was used, e.g., ten games ago, seven games ago, five games ago, etc.

Referring now to Fig. 11, one example of a game log 220 is illustrated. Game log 220 illustrates that the most recent three games have been played using Game 2 or interface 70. The previous four games were played using Game 3 or interface 80. The oldest three games kept in log 220 were played using Game 1 or interface 60. As illustrated, game log 220 is stored in memory device 14.

Memory log 220 is selectively called forth and displayed on display device 16 or 18 via a player input, such as the see pays input 88. Game log 220 shows other information such as the player's wager. As shown, in each of the ten games, the player has wagered twenty-seven total credits or three credits each on all nine paylines. Log 220 illustrates that the player has most recently won forty-five credits, but that the player won no credits or did not break even in the previous nine plays of the game. Game log 220 also shows the lines upon which the player has won. In the most previous game, for

example, the player won on lines three and eight in amounts totaling to the win of forty-five credits. Five games ago, the player won two credits on a single payline, namely payline six. In the oldest entry kept, the player won nine credits on three paylines: three, seven and eight.

5 As stated above, log 220 can store other information, such as the amount of credits won on each payline or even the particular winning symbol or symbol combinations appearing on the paylines. Importantly, game log 220 shows the player which interface 60, 70 or 80 that the player has used over the amount of games stored. It should be appreciated that game log 220 can
10 include any suitable number of entries, such as, fifty or one hundred entries.

As discussed above, it should be appreciated that if the processor or an event causes a change of the interface, in one embodiment, the gaming machine includes a player override input which enables the player to override the auto-selection of the interface.

15 It should also be appreciated that the present invention provides, in one embodiment, a menu which enables the player to see a plurality or all of the possible interfaces which the player or processor can select. In this embodiment, the player can select one of the interfaces for display such as through a touch screen.

20 It should also be appreciated that the present invention enables the player and/or game operable to access and determine one or more of the previous interfaces displayed by the player. Thus, the player or game operable can determine the interfaces selected by the machine or the player.

25 It should be understood that various changes and modifications to the presently preferred embodiments described herein will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Such changes and modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention and without diminishing its intended advantages. It is therefore intended that such changes and modifications be covered by the appended claims.

CLAIMS

The invention is claimed as follows:

1. A gaming device comprising:
5 a display device;
a primary game operable upon a wager by a player;
a plurality of different game display interfaces operable to be displayed
by the display device to represent said primary game to the player, wherein
each interface includes a plurality of different symbols, wherein the symbols in
10 each interface perform an identical function in the primary game with respect
to corresponding symbols in the other interfaces, and wherein a plurality of the
corresponding symbols in the interfaces are visually different from one
another; and
an event that causes the display device to switch from displaying one of
15 the interfaces for said primary game to another one of the interfaces for said
primary game.
2. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the event is the player's
selection of an input device that enables the player to select to switch from one
20 of the interfaces to another one of the interfaces.
3. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the primary game is a slot game
including a plurality of reels, wherein said symbols are displayed on the reels.
- 25 4. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein at least two of the interfaces
include at least one visually identical symbol.
5. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein each symbol in one of the
interfaces has a corresponding symbol in another one of the interfaces.
- 30 6. The gaming device of Claim 5, wherein the corresponding symbols are
provided in a same frequency in said two interfaces.

7. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein each symbol in one of the interfaces has a corresponding symbol in each of the other interfaces.

8. The gaming device of Claim 7, wherein corresponding symbols are
5 provided in a same frequency in each of the interfaces.

9. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein a plurality of symbols of one of the interfaces correspond to symbols in another one of the interfaces, and wherein the corresponding symbols have different but related indicia.

10

10. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein a plurality of symbols of one of the interfaces correspond to symbols in another one of the interfaces, and wherein the corresponding symbols have different and unrelated indicia.

11. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the each of the interfaces
15 includes indicia consistent with a different game theme.

12. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein each theme is selected from the group consisting of: a movie theme, a television show theme, a music
20 theme, a famous person/group theme, a sports theme, a famous historical event theme and any combination thereof.

13. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein a first interface display occurs before a second interface display, wherein the first interface corresponds to a
25 theme event that occurs chronologically before a theme event corresponding to the second interface.

14. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the interfaces each enable the player to advance to a same bonus game.

30

15. The gaming device of Claim 14, wherein a bonus game trigger for the bonus game in each of the interfaces has the same indicia.

16. The gaming device of Claim 15, wherein each interface includes a bonus game trigger for the bonus game, the triggers having different indicia.

17. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the interfaces each enable the player to advance to a plurality of bonus games, at least one bonus game having a bonus trigger common to each of the interfaces, and at least one bonus game having bonus triggers specific to the different interfaces.

18. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the interfaces each enable the player to advance to a bonus game specific to the interface.

19. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein a random decision determines whether to change interfaces.

20. The gaming device of Claim 19, which includes an input device that enables the player to override said random decision.

21. The gaming device of Claim 19, wherein the random decision is based on an event selected from the group consisting of: a number of games played, an amount wagered, an amount won/lost, a number of games played without a win, an amount of credits on a credit meter, a symbol display, and any combination thereof.

22. The gaming device of Claim 19, wherein the random decision is weighted according to an event selected from the group consisting of: a number of games played, an amount wagered, an amount won/lost, a number of games played without a win, an amount of credits on a credit meter, a symbol display and any combination thereof.

23. The gaming device of Claim 19, wherein the random decision is based on an outcome of the primary game.

24. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein at least two of the interfaces are characterized by: having payouts with different volatilities, payouts yielding different expected values, payouts with different eligibility requirements, and payouts with different triggering mechanisms.

5

25. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein a stage of a plurality of stages within a theme of the game determines which interface to use.

26. The gaming device of Claim 25, wherein each of the stages is
10 associated with a different interface.

27. The gaming device of Claim 25, wherein each of the stages is associated with a plurality of different interfaces.

28. The gaming device of Claim 27, wherein one of the interfaces within the different interfaces associated with one of the stages is selected by the primary
15 game to play.

29. The gaming device of Claim 28, wherein one of the interfaces within the different interfaces associated with one of the stages is selected by the player to play.

30. The gaming device of Claim 25, which includes an input device that
20 enables the player to override the interface selected based on the stage of the theme.

31. The gaming device of Claim 25, wherein the interface associated with the stage is played for a number of plays before a different stage and interface therefore are used.

25 32. The gaming device of Claim 31, wherein the number of plays is preset.

33. The gaming device of Claim 31, wherein the number of plays is determined randomly.

34. The gaming device of Claim 25, wherein the stages occur chronologically in accordance with a storyline associated with the theme.

35. The gaming device of Claim 1, which includes different audios
5 associated with at least two of the interfaces.

36. The gaming device of Claim 1, which includes a log of outcomes of primary games played symbols of the interfaces.

10 37. A gaming device comprising:
a display device;
a primary game operable upon a wager by a player;
a plurality of different game display interfaces operable to be displayed
by the display device to represent said primary game to the player, a menu
15 operable to be displayed to the player that displays the symbols of the
interfaces to the player, wherein each interface includes a plurality of different
symbols, wherein the symbols in each interface perform an identical function in
the primary game with respect to corresponding symbols in the other
interfaces, and wherein a plurality of the corresponding symbols in the
20 interfaces are visually different from one another; and
an event that causes the display device to switch from displaying one of
the interfaces for said primary game to another one of the interfaces for said
primary game.

25 38. The gaming device of Claim 37, wherein the event is the player's
selection of an input device corresponding to said menu and that enables the
player to select to switch from one of the interfaces displayed by said menu to
another one of the interfaces displayed by said menu.

30 39. The gaming device of Claim 37, wherein the primary game is a slot
game including a plurality of reels, wherein said symbols are displayed on the
reels.

40. The gaming device of Claim 37, wherein at least two of the interfaces include at least one visually identical symbol.

41. The gaming device of Claim 37, wherein each symbol in one of the interfaces has a corresponding symbol in another one of the interfaces.

42. The gaming device of Claim 41, wherein the corresponding symbols are provided in a same frequency in said two interfaces.

43. The gaming device of Claim 37, wherein each symbol in one of the interfaces has a corresponding symbol in each of the other interfaces.

44. The gaming device of Claim 43, wherein corresponding symbols are provided in a same frequency in each of the interfaces.

44. The gaming device of Claim 37, wherein a plurality of symbols of one of the interfaces correspond to symbols in another one of the interfaces, and wherein the corresponding symbols have different but related indicia.

45. The gaming device of Claim 37, wherein a plurality of symbols of one of the interfaces correspond to symbols in another one of the interfaces, and wherein the corresponding symbols have different and unrelated indicia.

46. A gaming device comprising:

a display device;

a primary game operable upon a wager by a player;

a plurality of visually different interfaces which are each adapted to be displayed by the display device to represent the primary game to the player, wherein each interface includes a plurality of the different symbols, wherein the symbols in each interface perform an identical function in the primary game in accordance with a paytable of the primary game, and wherein a plurality of the different symbols in each one of the interfaces look visually different than the

plurality of the different symbols in each of the other interfaces that perform the same function; and

an input device which enables the player to cause the display device to switch from displaying one of the interfaces for said primary game to another one of the interfaces for said primary game.

47. A gaming device comprising:

a display device;

a primary game operable upon a wager by a player;

a plurality of different game display interfaces operable to be displayed by the display device to represent the primary game to the player, wherein each interface includes a plurality of different symbols, wherein the symbols in each interface perform an identical function in the primary game with respect to corresponding symbols in the other interfaces, wherein each symbol in each of the interfaces has a corresponding symbol in each of the other interfaces, wherein the corresponding symbols are provided in a same frequency in each of said interfaces, and wherein a plurality of the corresponding symbols in the interfaces are visually different from one another; and

an event that causes the display device to switch from displaying one of the interfaces for said primary game to another one of the interfaces for said primary game.

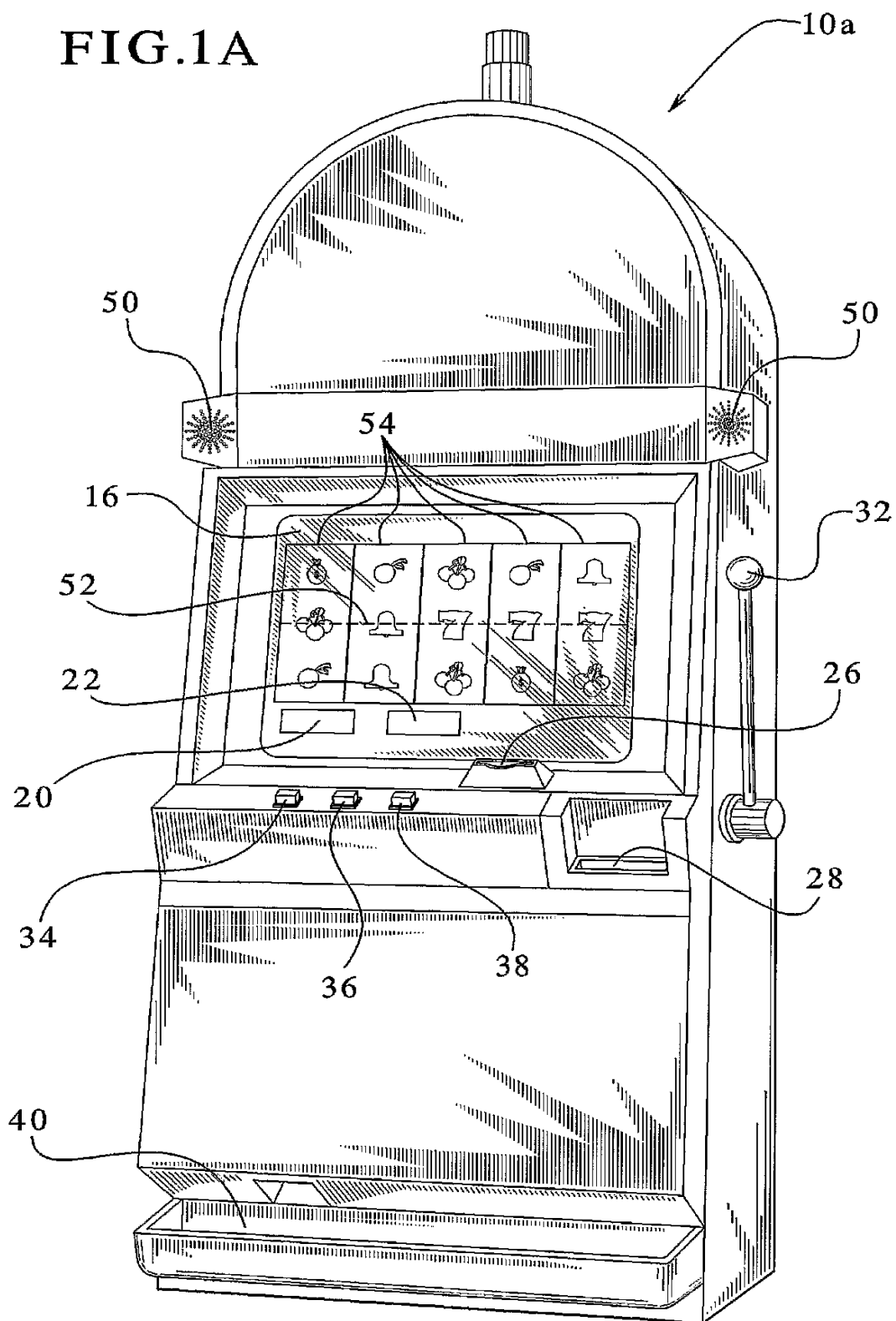
48. The gaming device of Claim 47, wherein the event is the player's selection of an input device that enables the player to select to switch from one of the interfaces to another one of the interfaces.

49. The gaming device of Claim 47, wherein the primary game is a slot game including a plurality of reels, wherein said symbols are displayed on the reels.

50. The gaming device of Claim 47, wherein each of the interfaces include at least one visually identical symbol.

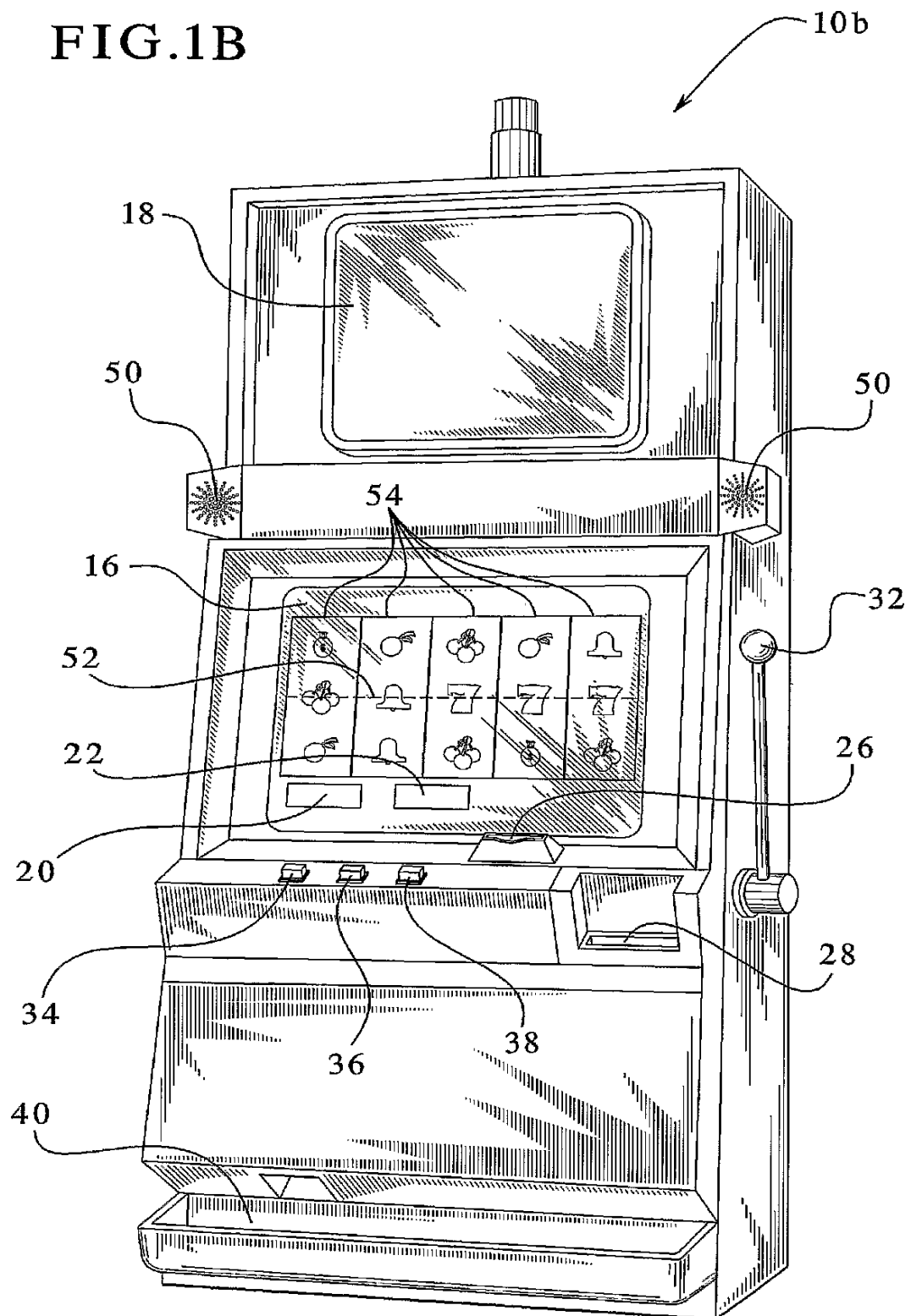
1/18

FIG. 1A



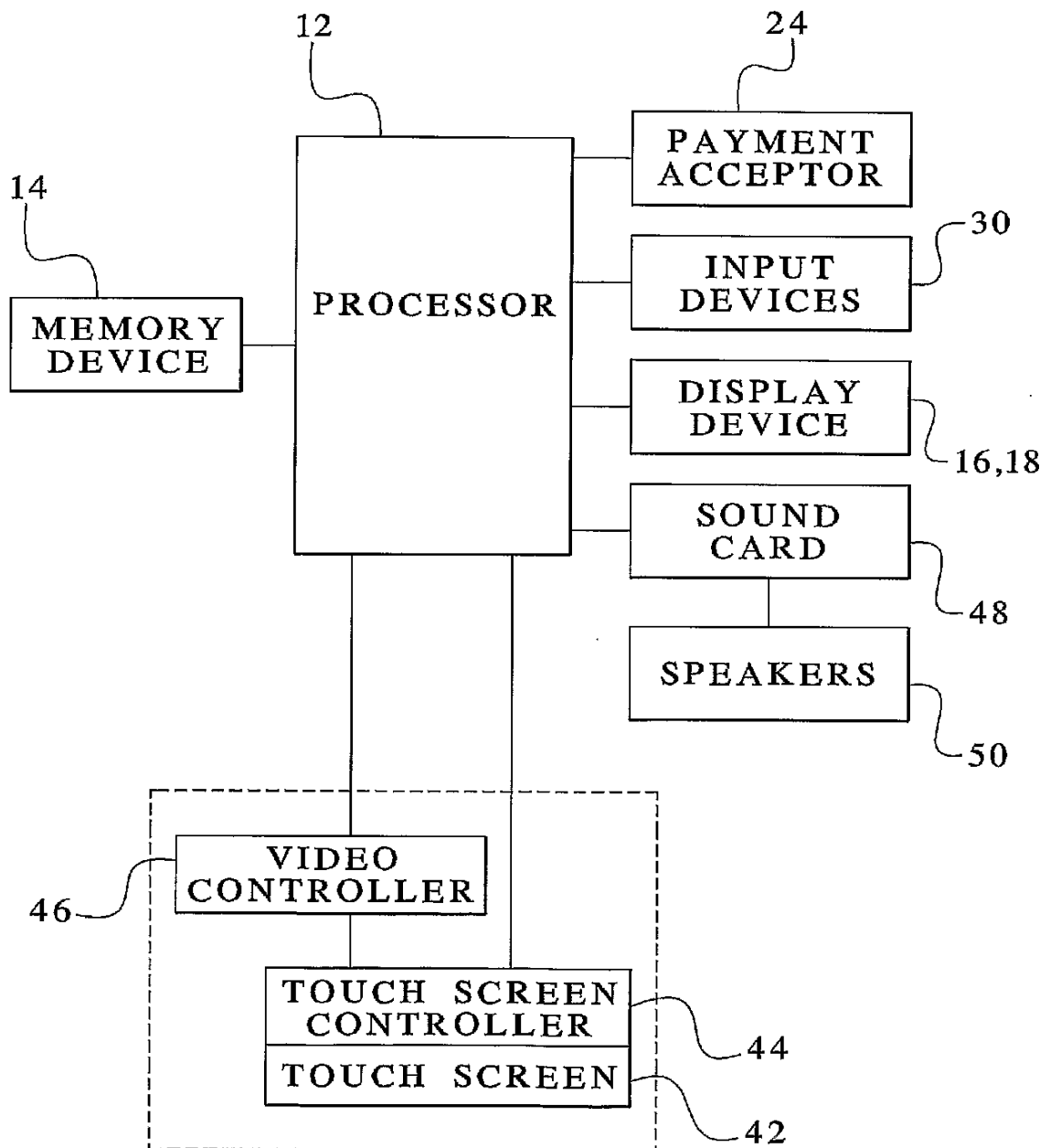
2/18

FIG.1B



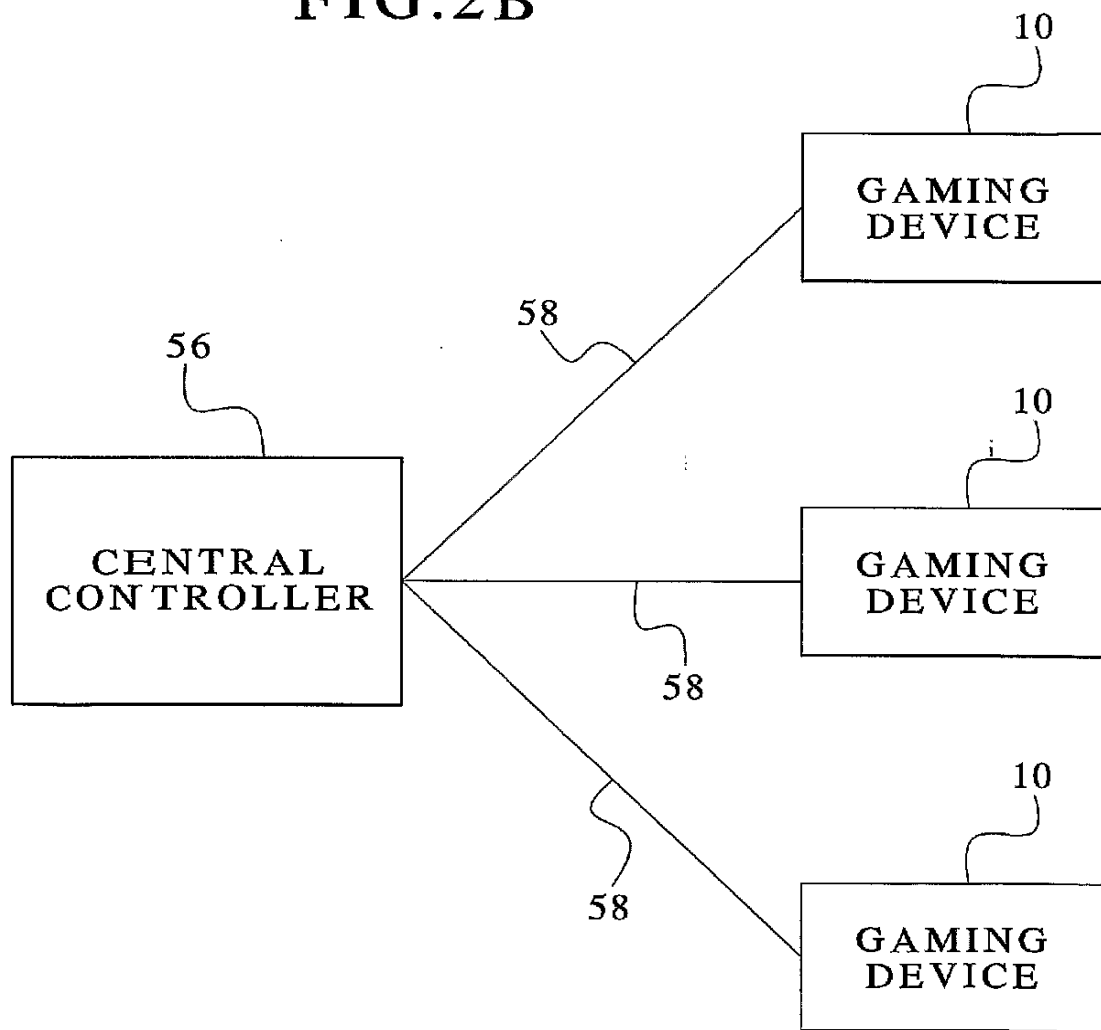
3/18

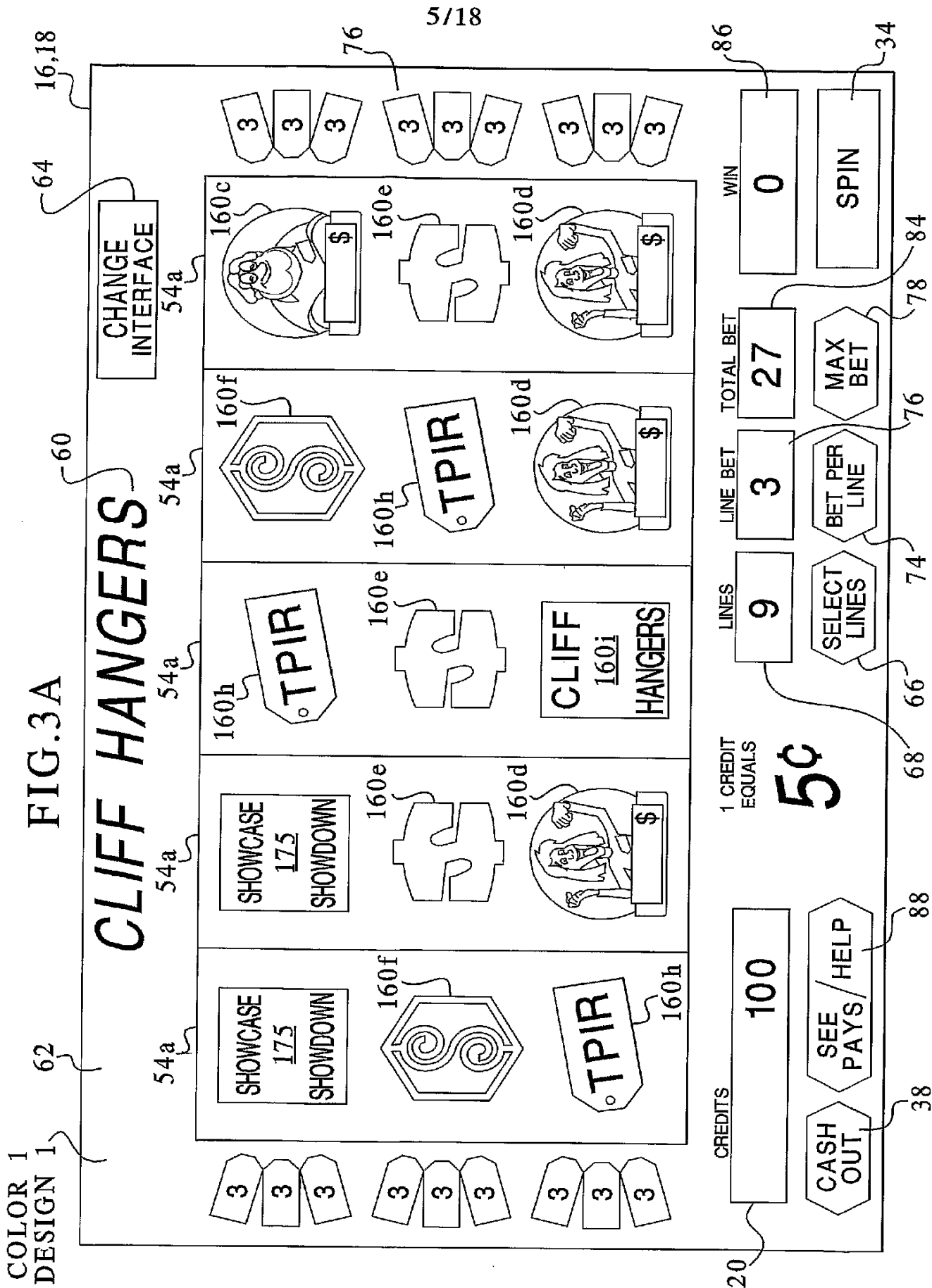
FIG. 2A



4/18

FIG. 2B





COLOR 2
DESIGN 2

FIG. 3B

PUNCH-A-BUNCH-

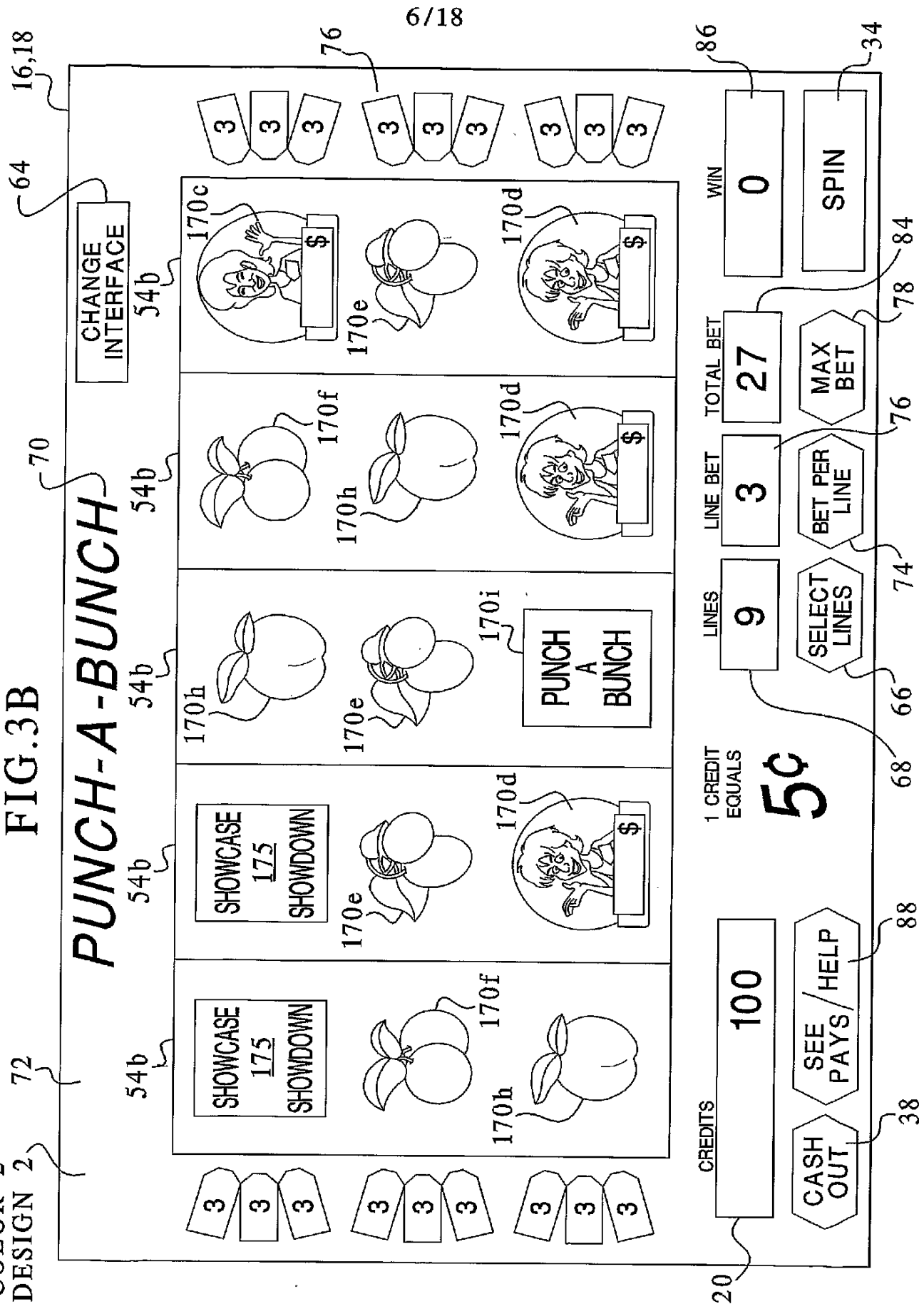
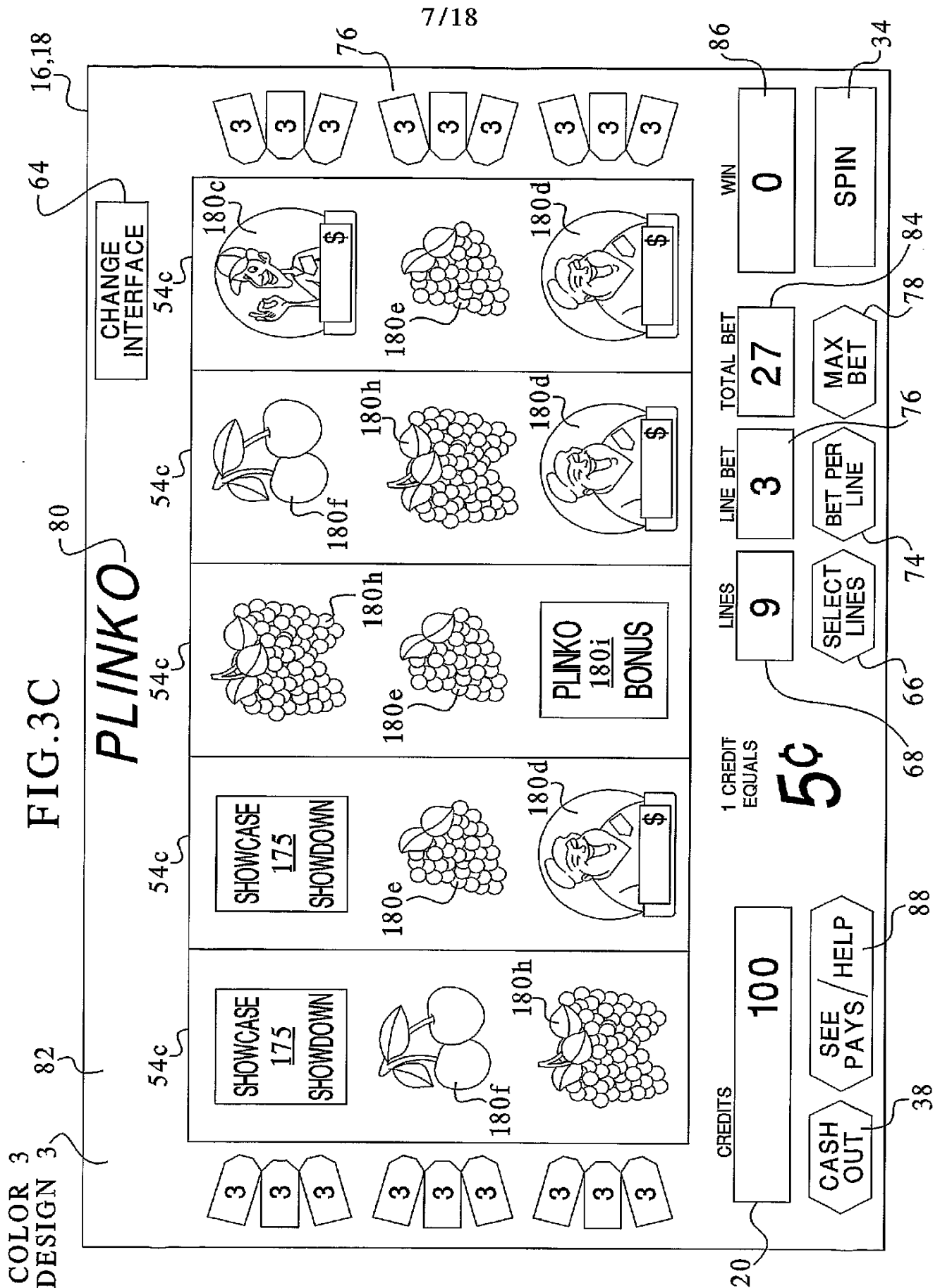


FIG. 3C



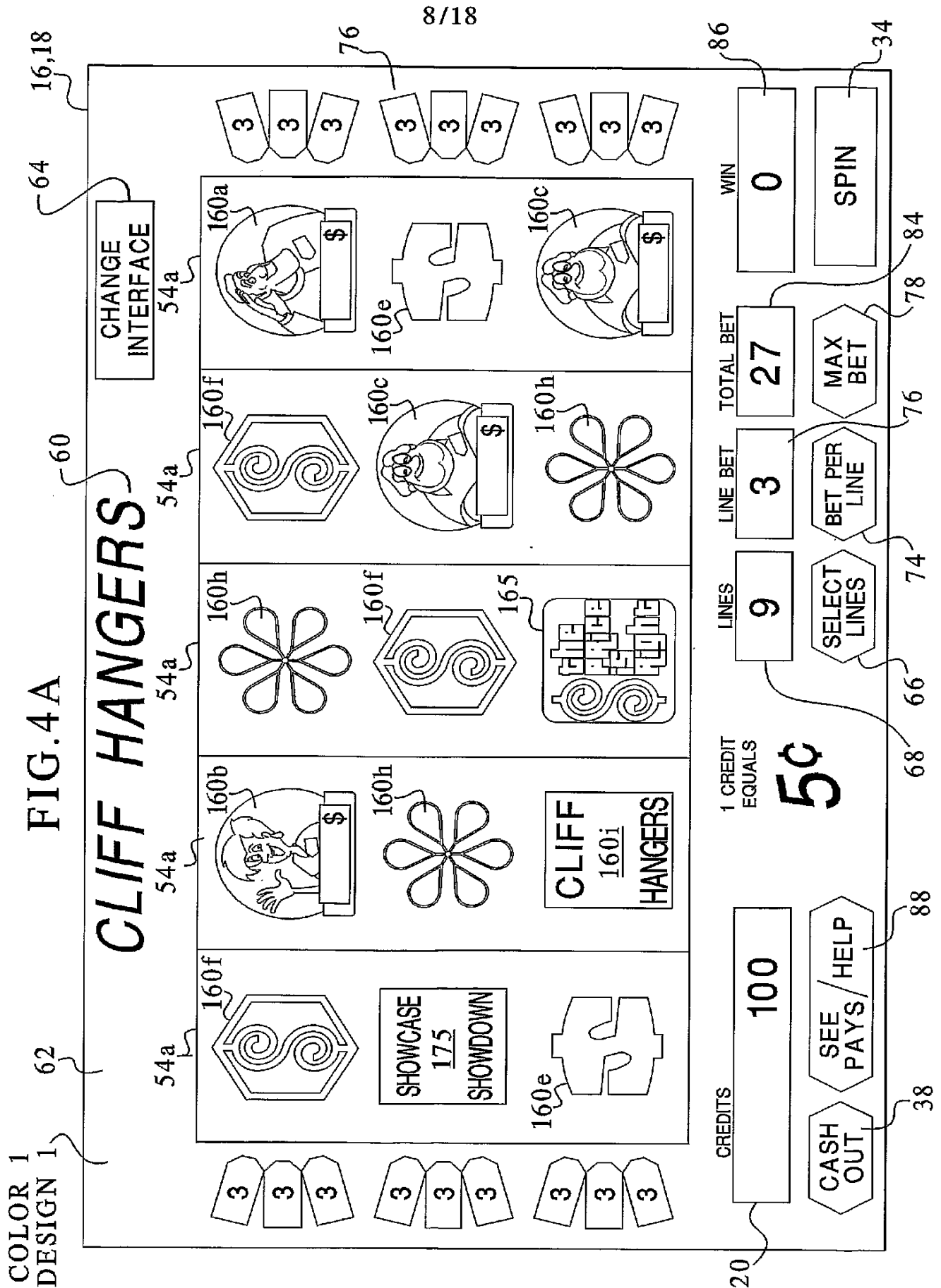
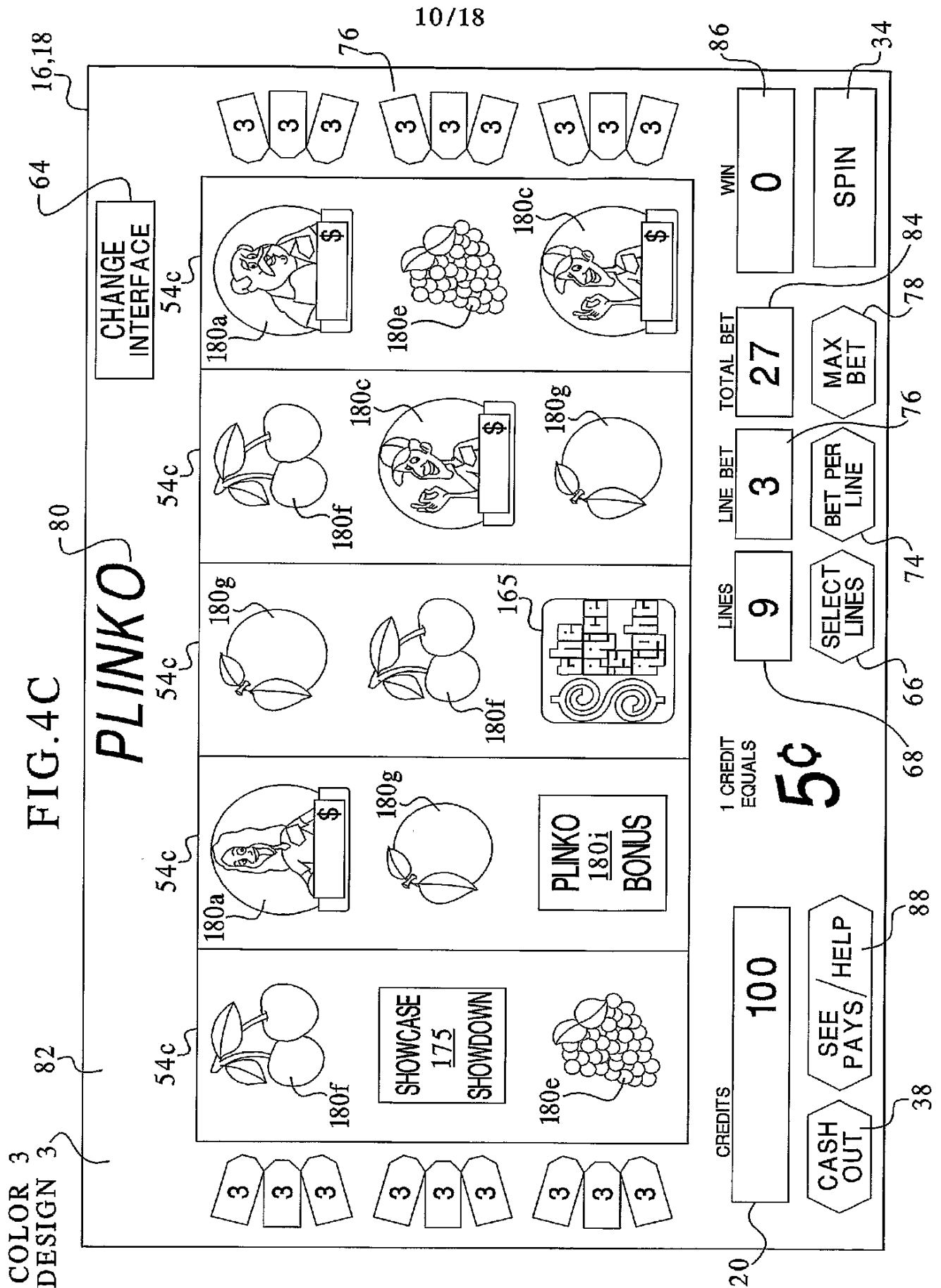


FIG. 4C



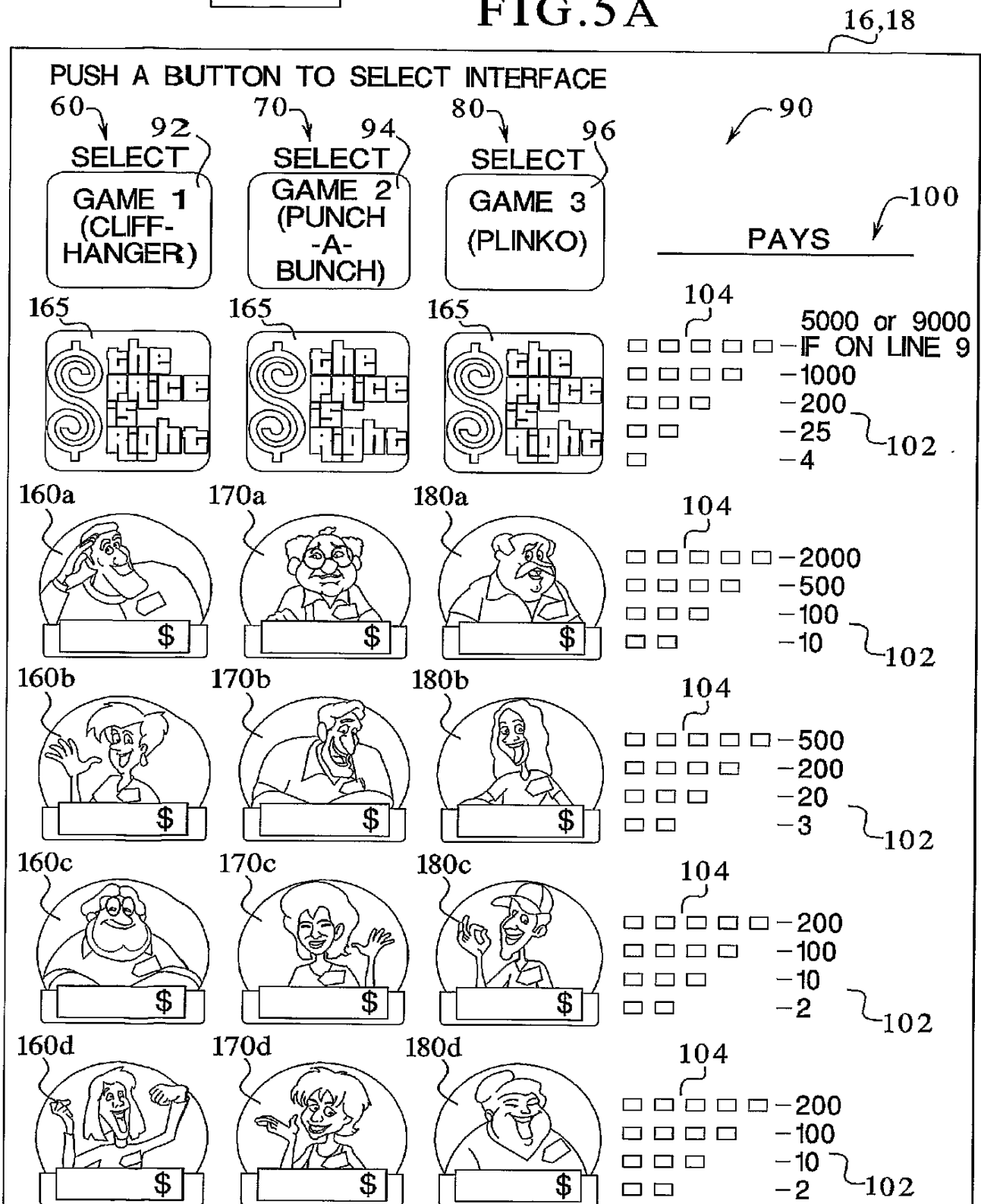
11/18

FIG. 5

FIG. 5A

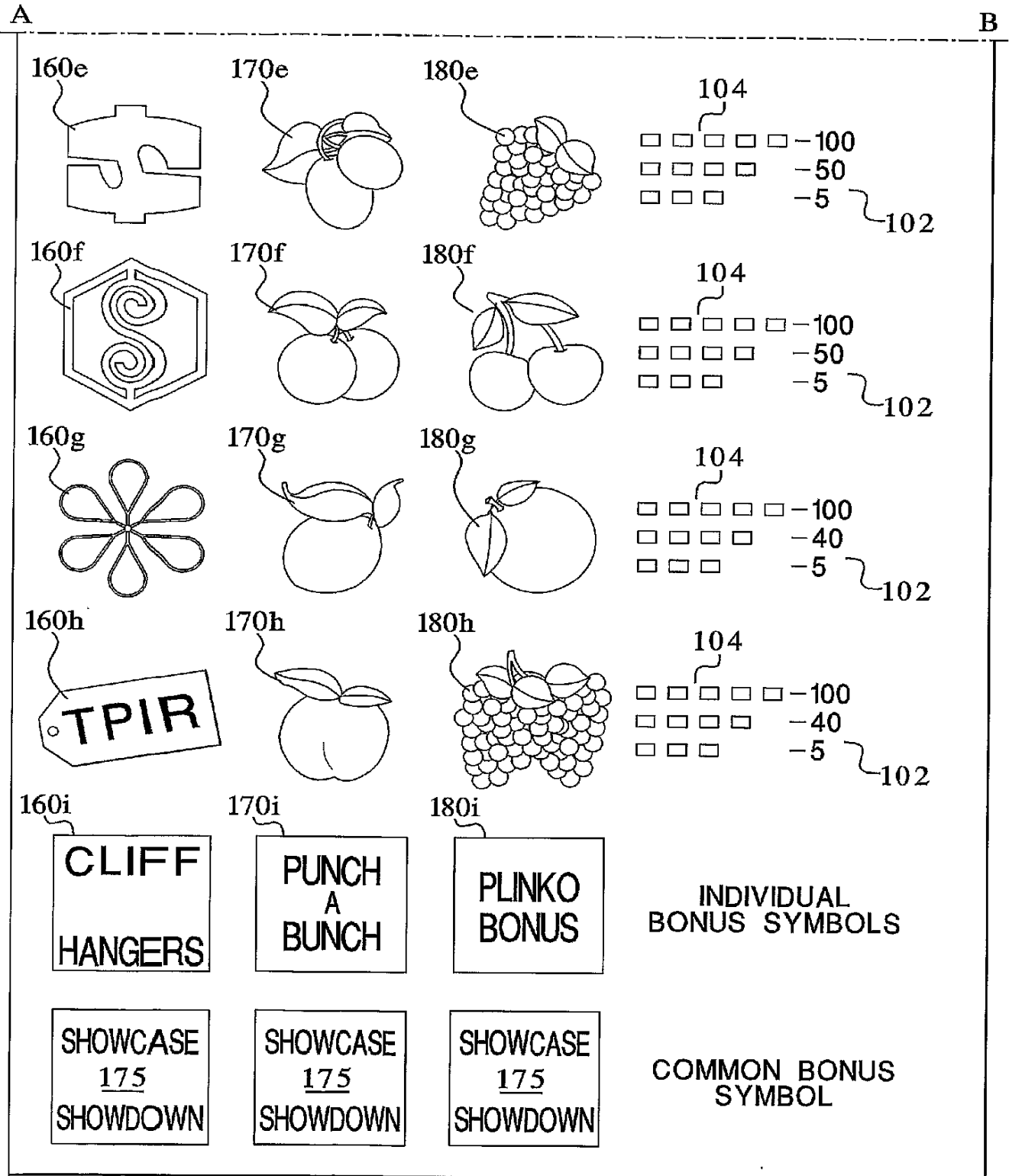
FIG. 5B

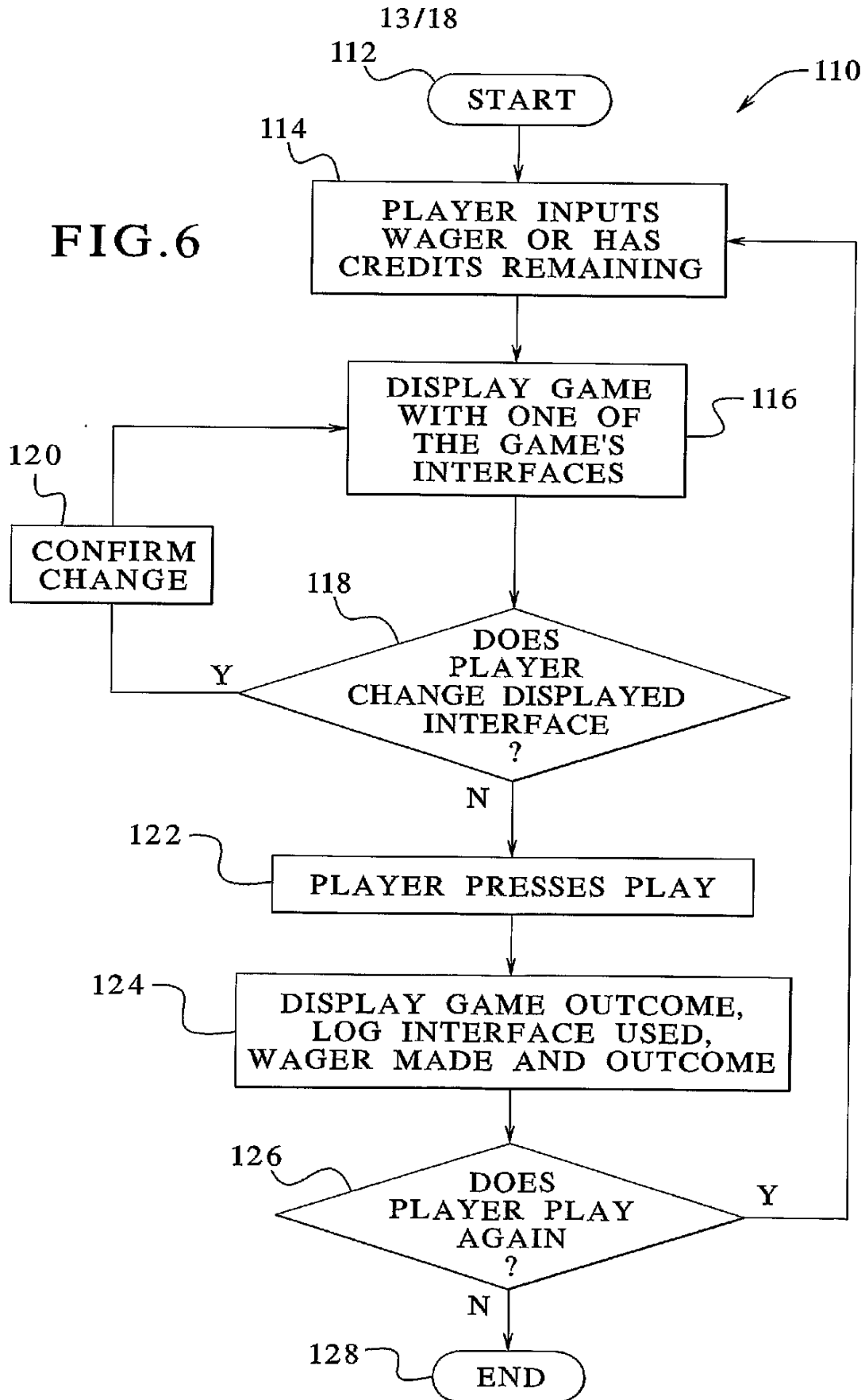
FIG. 5A

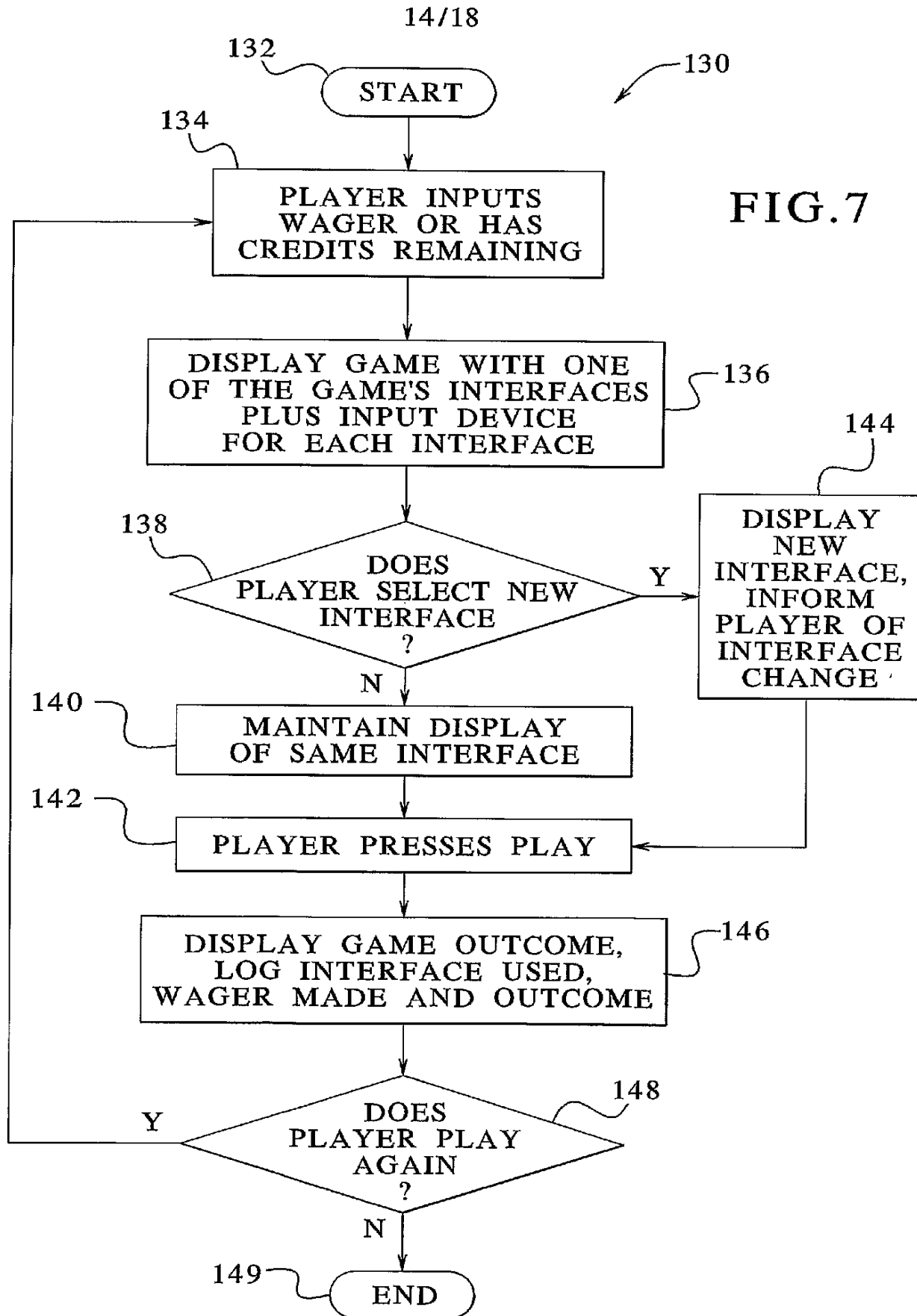


12/18

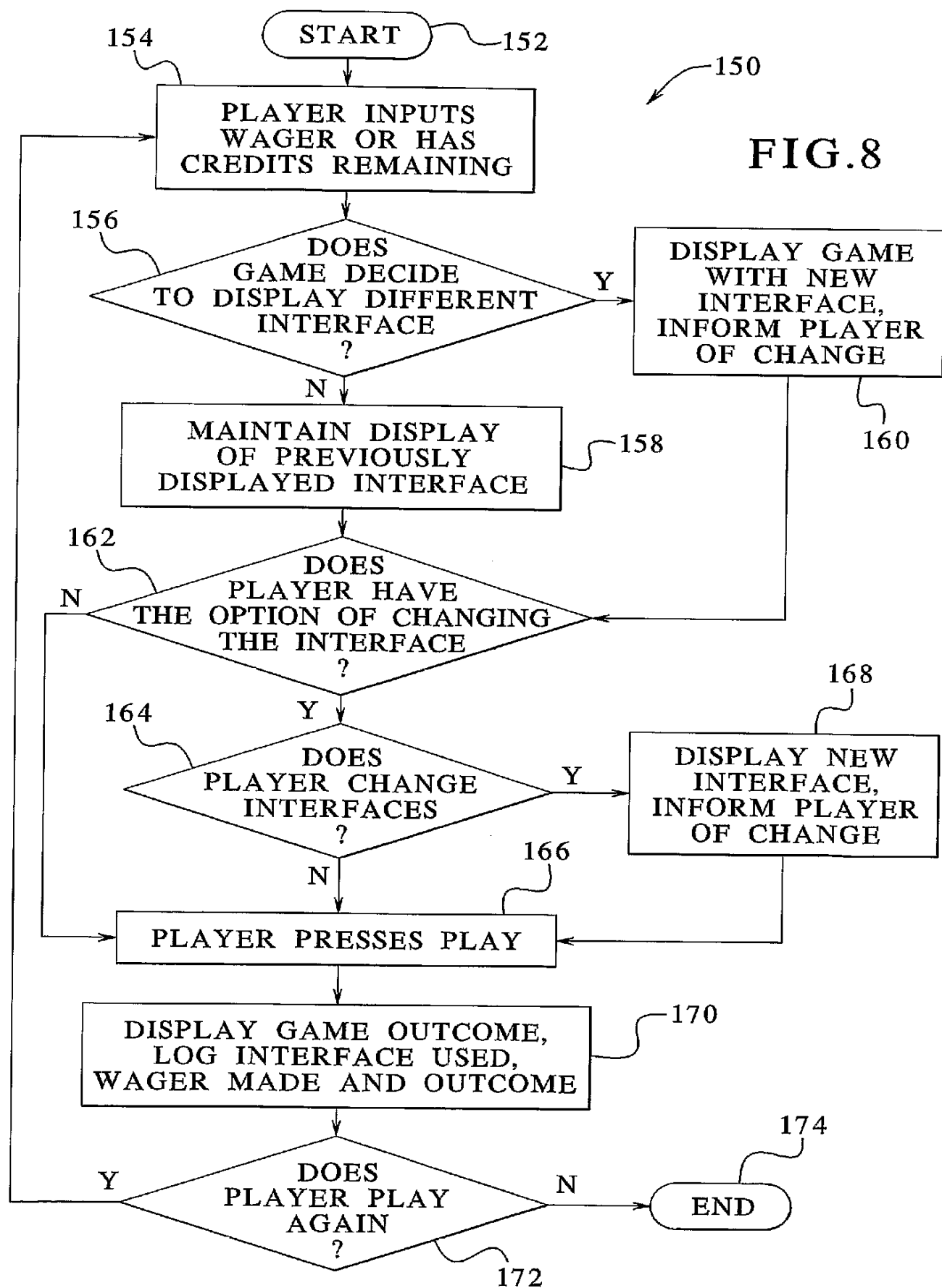
FIG. 5B







15/18



16/18







FIG.9**REASONS GAME
SWITCHES INTERFACES**

- SWITCH MADE RANDOMLY NOT BASED ON GAME EVENT 182
- SWITCH MADE RANDOMLY BASED ON GAME EVENT 184
- SWITCH MADE BASED ON PLAYER'S WAGER 186
- SWITCH MADE BASED ON CREDITS ACCUMULATED OR CREDITS LOST 188
- SWITCH MADE BASED ON NUMBER OF TIMES PLAYER HAS PLAYED GAME CONSECUTIVELY 190
- SWITCH MADE BASED ON A TABULATION MAINTAINED BY A PLAYER TRACKING CARD 192
- SWITCH MADE BASED ON GAME THEME (E.G. REEL SYMBOLS CHANGE TO FOLLOW STORY LINE OF STORY ASSOCIATED WITH GAME THEME) 194

17/18

FIG.10

**POSSIBLE VARIABLES
THAT CHANGE WITH
OR BASED ON CHANGE
OF INTERFACE**

- PAYTABLE VOLITILITY  202
- PAYBACK PERCENTAGE (E.G.  204
COULD HAVE "BONUS" INTERFACE),
DIFFERING PAYOUTS
- WAGER REQUIREMENT FOR  206
ELIGIBILITY, E.G., FOR POSSIBLE
PROGRESSIVE PAYOUT, JACKPOT
WIN, BONUS GAME PLAY,
OR ELIGIBILITY GENERATED
- BONUS TRIGGERING SYMBOL OR  208
COMBINATION LIKELIHOOD,
LIKELIHOOD OF GENERATING,
JACKPOT, PROGRESSIVE, PERSISTENCE
INCREMENT, BONUS GAME(S)
- TOTAL NUMBER OF DIFFERENT  210
SYMBOLS DIFFERS IN SETS
- PROPORTION AND/OR ORDERING  212
OF SYMBOLS OR REEL STRIPS

18/18

FIG.11

